LIVING AND DOING POLITICS:

AN EDUCATIONAL TRAVELOGUE THROUGH MEANINGS, PROCESSES AND EFFECTS

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Abstract

Young people, greatly affected by the economic crisis, labour precariousness and increased ontological insecurity, are under the spotlight regarding their civic and political participation and its role in legitimising democracy. Indeed, over the last years, the gap between institutional politics and young people has been severely aggravated while, at the same time, new political repertoires and agendas have emerged. This research, then, aims at a) exploring the relationship between the pedagogical and transformative potential of civic and political experiences and complex academic thinking; b) understanding the effects of socioeconomic variables on such experiences; c) examining how youngsters interpret the socio-political scenario and discuss the opportunities for democratic participation; d) and describing how youngsters live and do politics in different contexts. Based on a mixed-methods design, the research develops through three levels of analysis: individual (survey of 1107 youngsters), group (5 focus group discussions) and contextual (2 ethnographic studies). Overall, the results show that the quality of participation experiences contributes to the development of self-regulated learning, promoting academic success; that socioeconomic variables play different roles in the political knowledge and participatory patterns, with the schooling context adding variation to those patterns. Also, youngsters display critical and engaged discourses about the current economic crisis, making important points about access to institutional politics, namely regarding a misrecognition of their political agency and the lack of political education, which nurture a vicious cycle of political disengagement (usually interpreted as political disinterest). Finally, ethnographic studies in the youth wing of a political party and in an NGO reveal different ways of working towards social change: in the first, debatement and pedagogical politics guide the experience; in the second, caring for the other and investing in the volunteers' personal development coexist with the disavowing of a politicised approach to social issues. In sum, this research portrays young people as active, politically interested citizens; yet, they are mostly driven to unconventional and civic forms of participation. The overall delegitimisation of political discourses and the unavailability of the institutional politics realm for power sharing is leading to the depolitization of the 'civic', downplaying youngsters' political capital. The engagement with central democratic struggles, such as inequality, is potentially transformative and pedagogical. The recognition of those learning experiences should be promoted and valued because it enhances academic performance, but mainly because the survival of democracy depends on it.

Resumo

Os jovens, fortemente afetados pela crise económica, pela precariedade laboral e pela crescente insegurança ontológica, estão no centro das atenções no que respeita à participação cívica e política e seu papel na legitimação democrática. Com efeito, nos últimos anos o fosso entre a política institucional e os grupos juvenis tem-se agravado, e simultaneamente novos repertórios e agendas políticas têm emergido. Esta investigação pretende a) explorar a relação entre o potencial pedagógico das experiencias cívicas e políticas e a complexidade do pensamento académico; b) compreender os efeitos das variáveis socioeconómicas nessas experiências; c) analisar como os jovens interpretam o cenário sociopolítico e discutem as oportunidades de participação democrática; d) e descrever o modo como vivem e fazem política em diferentes contextos de participação. Baseada numa metodologia mista, esta investigação desenvolve-se em três níveis de análise: individual (inquéritos por questionário a 1107 jovens), grupal (5 grupos de discussão focalizada) e contextual (2 etnografias). De um modo geral, os resultados mostram que a qualidade da participação contribui para a auto-regulação da aprendizagem; as variáveis socioeconómicas desempenham diferentes papéis no conhecimento político e nos padrões de participação, com o contexto escolar a introduzir variações nesses padrões. Adicionalmente, os jovens apresentam discursos críticos e comprometidos sobre a crise económica, levantando importantes questões sobre o acesso à política institucional, nomeadamente no que diz respeito à falta de reconhecimento da sua agência política e à falta de educação política, que alimenta um ciclo vicioso de afastamento (comummente interpretado como desinteresse político). Finalmente, as etnografias numa juventude partidária e numa ONG revelam diferentes modos de promover a mudança social: no primeiro, a política de debate e pedagógica guiam a experiência; no segundo, cuidar do outro e investir no desenvolvimento pessoal dos voluntários coexiste com a rejeição de uma abordagem politizada das questões sociais. Em suma, esta investigação mostra os jovens como cidadãos ativos e politicamente interessados; são, no entanto, conduzidos principalmente para formas não-convencionais e cívicas de participação. A deslegitimação geral de discursos políticos e a indisponibilidade da esfera política institucional para a partilha de poder está a conduzir à despolitização do 'cívico', restringindo o capital político juvenil. O confronto de questões democráticas centrais, como a desigualdade, é potencialmente transformador e pedagógico. O reconhecimento dessas experiências de aprendizagem deve ser promovido e valorizado porque impulsiona o sucesso académico, mas fundamentalmente porque a sobrevivência da democracia depende disso.

Résumé

Les jeunes, fortement affectés par la crise économique, par la précarité et l'insécurité ontologique, sont au centre des débats sur la participation civique et politique et leur rôle dans la légitimation démocratique. En effet, récemment, l'écart entre la politique institutionnelle et les jeunes a accru et, en même temps, nouveaux répertoires et agendas politiques ont paru. Cette recherche vise a) explorer la relation entre le potentiel pédagogique des expériences civiques et politiques et la complexité de la pensée académique; b) comprendre les effets des variables socio-économiques dans ces expériences; c) analyser comment les jeunes interprètent la scène sociopolitique et discutent les possibilités de participation démocratique; d) décrire comment ils vivent et font la politique dans différent contextes de participation. La recherche est basée sur une méthodologie mixte et se développe sur 3 niveaux: individuel (questionnaires à 1107 jeunes), groupal (5 groupes de discussion) et contextuelle (2 ethnographies). Les résultats montrent que la qualité de la participation contribue à l'autorégulation de l'apprentissage; que les variables socio-économiques jouent des rôles différents dans la connaissance politique et les modes de participation, avec variations introduites par le contexte scolaire. Les jeunes présentent des discoures critiques et engagés sur la crise économique, et soulèvent questions importantes sur l'accès à la politique institutionnelle, surtout en ce qui concerne le manque de reconnaissance de leur agence politique et le manque d'éducation politique, alimentant un cycle vicieux de désengagement (couramment interprété comme absence d'intérêt politique). Finalement, les ethnographies dans une jeunesse partisane et une ONG révèlent différentes façons de promouvoir le changement social: dans le premier cas, les politiques de debatement et pédagogique guide l'expérience; dans le second, prendre soin des autres et investir dans le développement personnel des volontaires coexiste avec the rejet d'une approche politisée aux questions sociales. En bref, on montre les jeunes comme citoyens actifs, politiquement intéressés; ils sont, malgré tout, menées surtout à formes non conventionnelles et civiques de participation. La délégitimation généralisé des discours politiques et la non-disponibilité de la politique institutionnelle pour partager le pouvoir conduisent à la dépolitisation du 'civique', limitant le capital politique de la jeunesse. L'engagement avec luttes démocratiques fondamentales, comme l'inégalité, est potentiellement transformatrice et éducatif. La reconnaissance de ces expériences d'apprentissage doit être encouragée et valorisée car elles favorisent la réussite scolaire, et surtout parce que la survie de la démocratie en dépend.

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Introductory Notes

The world's political landscape has been changing considerably over the past few years. While this thesis was in the making, the Arab dictatorships were significantly shaken up, protests against austerity and the undue influence of financial corporations and supra-national institutions on national governments gained massive dimensions both in Europe and in America, the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union struck a heavy blow to the European project, the Portuguese democracy witnessed a historical left-wing pact to form government, and Donald Trump was elected as president of the United States of America. The growing chasm between the general population and the political elites – the so-called 'political establishment' – may well be simultaneously creating a renewed room for collective mobilization and strengthening the ability of radical political agendas to capture the generalized discontentment. In this sense, we are "currently witnessing a thorough re-hashing of allegedly untouchable principles of democracy" (Bauman, 2016)[1]. Bringing power closer to the people seems to be a widespread message that signals transformation regarding how citizens[2] are relating to politics, either by placing their hopes in radical alternatives or drifting away from institutional domains. In this regard, young people have been occupying a central place in academic and political discourses. Amid portraits of young people that oscillate between them being the protagonists of a 'reinvention in political activism' (Norris, 2002) or politically apathetic (Henn, Weinstein & Wring, 2002), youth participation goes to the very heart of the transformations of the democratic model, uncovering its possibilities and contradictions.

Such a political context inevitably frames the research on youth democratic participation. Youth, as a highly formative life stage, represents an important period of development, also regarding political and civic realms, with impacts later in life (e.g., Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002). Thus, the alarming accounts about the increasing estrangement of young people from political systems and, consequently, the crisis of democracy, have been echoed all over the world (Cammaerts, Bruter, Banaji, Harrison, & Anstead, 2015). By exploring meanings, processes and effects of participation we can

[1] https://www.socialeurope.eu/2016/11/46978/

[2] In this research, we use the term 'citizens' in a broad sense, not limited to its legal meaning, but rather to individuals as members of a political community.

hopefully contribute to shedding some light on how the very concepts of participation and democracy are being defined by young people[3] and, ultimately, add new pieces to the debate about the health and legitimacy of European democratic systems (Cammaerts et al., 2015). In this regard, the examination of how young people are practicing their democratic citizenship – their experiences and contexts of civic and political participation – goes hand-in-hand with the consideration of those experiences as potentially pedagogical, both in terms of democratic learning and personal transformation.

This doctoral thesis follows a research line that has been developed in the University of Porto since the 1990's. It focuses on the political socialisation and development of young people, and it has been showing that, depending on the participation context, different opportunities for civic and political development are promoted (see Fernandes-Jesus, Ferreira & Menezes, 2012c). This thesis seeks to contribute to this field by researching youngsters' current modes of doing and living politics. In other words, we seek to account for the forms and contexts through which young people participate and to describe how meaning is created through participatory processes; we also intend to highlight what can be learned from collective modes of civic and political involvement. As a potentially pedagogical process, participation may impact not only political development but also complex academic skills. Thus, it is also our goal to understand if and how learning involved in civic and political experiences can be transferred to other spheres of life. Furthermore, we also address how socio-economic conditions influence youngsters' experiences and in what terms they define their political agency in the context of a wider political scenario. These are utterly important dimensions of 'living politics', which impact the ways of 'doing politics' – the possibilities and impossibilities of democratic participation.

The breadth of such a research endeavour can only be tackled by pushing epistemological boundaries and adopting a plural methodological toolbox. This research will be developed through three levels of analysis: individuals, in groups, and within contexts. In each level, we address specific research questions through different methods: from a quantitative study (individuals) to focus groups discussions (in groups), through to ethnography (within contexts). This sequential design enabled linking the results obtained throughout the different phases of the research, thus

[3] In referring to young people we recognise how diverse and heterogeneous this social group is. The focus of this research is on young people between 14 and 30 years old, from urban and semi-urban locations, but mostly from the metropolitan area of Porto. They are students from the regular school system (public and private) and from alterative educational pathways.

complexifying and amplifying our understanding of the phenomenon of youth participation. We believe this "work of epistemological and ontological miscegenation"[4] (Correia, 1998, p. 15), together with the combination of different methodological approaches to address the questions we are trying to answer, can indeed provide a fuller picture of the phenomenon at stake. This is also a way to take education beyond the "reductive and pragmatic visions" and towards a comprehension of the human being as

> "a full citizen who needs not only to master scientific and technical knowledge, but also to have conditions that promote a critical understanding of the growing complexity of life in an increasingly unstable (*liquid* in Zygmunt Bauman's terms), ambiguous and heterogeneous world, in terms of opportunities for achievement, pathways and possible futures" (Afonso, 2013, p. 16).

The different phases of this research will offer new inputs regarding the dimensions of living and doing politics, and hopefully enable drawing a more complete vision of youth civic and political participation. Therefore, this thesis is grounded in the strong inter- and trans- disciplinary culture that characterises the Education Sciences (Charlot, 2006), as they are "made of unusual approximations, enabled by their multi-referentiality" (Silva, 2011, p. 55). To be sure, as the research progressed, and either changed its angle or amplified its scope, the need to summon different theoretical approaches to make better sense of the data became unavoidable. And, quite frankly, we did not wish to avoid it. Although the fields of education, psychology and political science constitute the foundations of this research, the sociological and anthropological approaches came to be of great relevance in linking the individual effects of participation to the nitty-gritty of civic and political experiences as they actually unfold. In fact, this work is the result of itinerant dialogues between areas as different as education, political psychology and political sociology. Concerning the latter, the attendance of the ethnography workshops with Gianpaolo Baiocchi at New York University, in the spring of 2015, and the participation in the political sociology group (HEPO) meetings at the University of Helsinki, with Eeva Luhtakallio, in the spring of 2016, were extremely useful in amplifying our understanding – despite feelings of (epistemological) foreignness. These travels to the United States and to Finland were meant to put us in contact with tools and approaches that might complement our research equipment, and that would eventually enable putting all the pieces together and drawing an educational travelogue. While recognizing the risks involved in such 'miscegenation', we believe

[4] Author's translation.

that it can contribute to the development of the field of political sociology in Portugal, and also to the horizontal communication between different research fields. Therefore, we agree with Charlot (2006, p. 9) when he states that those "who wish to study a complex phenomenon cannot have a simple, one-dimensional discourse." Since our goal, as researchers, is trying to provide the most adequate and complete answers – for instance, to how learning in civic and political experiences can be transferred to students' school life –, we need to consider "plurality, encompassing the diversity of the methodological approaches and integrating the whole complexity of scientific thinking" (Nóvoa, 2009, p. 82). As pointed out by Charlot (2006), educational researchers are often regarded in a suspicious way, and find themselves in a position where they have to pinpoint the specific areas their studies belong to – e.g., psychology, sociology. This is because the Education Sciences are an epistemological field where "knowledge, concepts and methods from a wide range of disciplines crosscut, challenge themselves and, sometimes, fecundate each other" (ibid., p. 9). This very circulation defines what the Education Sciences are: "a discipline capable of facing the complexities and contradictions that characterise contemporaneity" (ibid.).

"The devotion of democracy to education is a familiar fact", not only because education creates a disposition to and an interest in participation (thereby legitimising democracies), but also because democracy is a shared mode of living in which the importance of participation is relationally created (Dewey, 1916). Thus, the very definition of education implies the reorganisation of experiences leading to a growing perception of the connections and continuities between them – that is, loading experiences with meaning (ibid.). In addition to the work of Dewey being such a valuable contribution to understanding participation and education as two sides of the same coin, it may also be inspirational for our very own research. Indeed, we can envisage the research process as the attempt to consciously (re)connect the questions we are putting forward and the answers we are getting from the research participants. Trying to connect, in a backwards and forwards movement, what individuals claim they do, how they do it, and what they say about what can be done (the self-reported behaviours, the lived experience and the production of discourse) requires a great deal of effort. Mixed methods were used in this research because each method is capable of shedding a different kind of light on the phenomenon of youth participation. Hopefully, throughout this continuous reorganisation of questions and answers, we were able to produce a meaningful piece of research, organised as follows:

Chapter 1 presents our theoretical framework on youth civic and political participation and an overview of how this research project was developed. It starts by exploring the concept of participation (its conceptual boundaries, as depicted in the literature, and its appropriations by different research fields), and then moves towards an examination of the relationship between young people and the political sphere (the influential individual and structural factors, the problematization of the 'crisis-of-participation' narrative and of the associated democratic challenges). In this train of thought, the notion of post-democracy is summoned to make sense of the current changes in the democratic model and their implications for participation. Later in the chapter, the focus narrows down towards the individual benefits of participation, exploring the potentially pedagogical nature of civic and political experiences and their translation into other domains of the life of the youngsters. This chapter comes to an end by unfolding the questions driving this research and the methodological approaches used to address them, briefly presenting the three stages of this research project, which are then the object of the ensuing chapters.

Everything needs to be understood in its context. Thus, all three empirical chapters start with a section on the socio-political context of the period in which the data were collected; furthermore, a specific methodological framework is presented in each of these chapters, as they deal with different research stages, with different goals and methods for accomplishing them. Once this thesis is mostly constituted by articles – either already published, accepted for publication, or undergoing review – we are aware that the reader will find some repetitions in the information about the socio-political context, the data collection and analysis procedures, and even regarding some of the theoretical statements. A degree of repetition is inevitable given that the articles are autonomous, short pieces and we felt the need to develop and expand some of the ideas presented in them.

Chapter 2 is about the quantitative stage of this research. It begins by presenting the levels of civic and political participation of 1107 Portuguese students (from different types of schools and different geographical locations) and the quality of their participation experiences. The third section in this chapter presents Article 1 [published], titled "*Linking learning contexts: The relationship between students' civic and political experiences and their self-regulation in school*", which explores how participation can contribute to school success. In the fourth section, through Article 2 [accepted for publication], titled "*In-between fatalism and leverage: The different effects of socioeconomic variables on students' civic and political experiences and*

literacy", the influence of socioeconomic status on participation and literacy is examined. Finally, young people's discourses about the anti-austerity demonstrations that took place in Portugal are analysed and discussed in Article 3 [accepted for publication], titled "*'Citizens still have a right to democracy': young students' discourses on anti-austerity demonstrations in Portugal*". The data in this article is complemented by a sub-section analysing the youngsters' discursive complexity.

Chapter 3 is grounded on the data from 5 focus group discussions with 40 youngsters in alternative educational pathways. It presents their perspectives and experiences of participation, the factors they highlight as the most influential in young people's engagement, their viewpoints on the political system and the proposals they put forward in order to improve the relationship between young people and the political sphere. It concludes by discussing the points youngsters make concerning the factors and processes influencing youth democratic participation.

Chapter 4, grounded in the results of the quantitative study and the focus group discussions, explores the processes of participation through two ethnographic studies. In the first section, the importance of political ethnography for the study of the participation experiences is highlighted as a crucial contribution to this field. The second section presents Article 4 [submitted], which describes how the members of a youth wing live and do politics and what they learn from it: "*Living, doing and learning from politics in a youth wing of a political party*". The third section – Article 5 [accepted for publication] – explores how young volunteers in an NGO experience their civic and political participation. This article is titled "*Being civic while disavowing politics: an ethnography of a youth NGO in Portugal*".

Finally, Chapter 5 draws the overall conclusions of this research, linking the results that emerged from the individual self-reports, the group discussions and the in-context interactions. Educational and political implications of these results are discussed, and future research possibilities are sketched.

CHAPTER 1

Youth civic and political participation: a ‘burning issue’ or ‘hot air’?

1.1. Revising conceptual boundaries: what counts as participation?

What is democratic participation? 'Participation' is one of the most popular, yet controversial, concepts in the literature. Its scope and nature are increasingly under the spotlight, because democracy only truly exists if citizens care about and get involved in public issues – and democracy is, we should add, currently facing relevant and sometimes rather unanticipated challenges in western societies, from low levels of voter turnout to the rise of populism and intolerance, through to a generalised decrease in conventional forms of participation by young people. Portugal, in particular, ranks as a 'flawed democracy' in the 2015 Democracy Index of the Economist's Intelligence Unit (2016). This ranking is based on how democratic countries score in five domains: electoral process and pluralism; functioning of government; political participation; political culture and civic liberties. While Portugal scores high on the electoral process and on civic liberties, it scores low on the other three dimensions: functioning of government, political participation and political culture. Actually, only 20 out of 167 democratic countries are classified as full democracies. This Index highlights the decline of public participation in politics as one of the main challenges democracies face today, which gives room to the rise of populist parties and polarised discourses and behaviours.

Perhaps because of this, it is common to find, among academic and official discourses, statements stressing the importance of participation as "the elixir of life for democracy" (Van Deth, 2014, p. 2), or "the bedrock upon which democracy rests" (Martin Chungong, secretary-general of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015[5]), playing a "crucial role for the development of democracy, both in shaping its institutions and in embedding and legitimising them socially" (Forbrig, 2005, p. 12). The Council of Europe (2015) stresses that "participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election", stressing the need "to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society"[6]. Despite this, in its Better Life Index, the OECD states that "voter participation is the best existing means of measuring civic and political

[5] Martin Chungong, secretary-general of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, on the occasion of International Democracy Day, September 15th, 2015 (http://www.yabiladi.com/img/content/EIU-Democracy-Index-2015.pdf)

[6] http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Coe_youth/Youth_Participation_Charter_en.asp

engagement" (2011)[7]. In its turn, an overview of standards and practices in Council of Europe Member States (2016)[8] asserts that "most policy documents consider participation as a continuum of interaction between different levels of public authority and the public, which ranges from informing and listening to implementing jointly agreed solutions" (p. 20).

Assuming, then, that participation is crucial for the consolidation and development of democracies, what is it that really counts as participation? The main goal of this first section is to provide an answer to this question. Social concepts need to be broad in order to fit reality, but how to find the balance between 'stretching' them and not falling prey to buzzwords? If anything and everything may fall within the scope of the concept of 'participation', then it risks losing all meaning and becoming a catch-all term for everything individuals do. We believe that the importance of participation lies pretty much in the maintenance of the strength of the social fabric, in the extent it guarantees and legitimises democracies. For that, citizens must believe that their contribution to a more equal, fairer, respectful and liveable society matters. If everyone cares about social well-being, current and future generations will benefit. Thus, putting it in a simple, straightforward, way, participation – and here we are talking about democratic participation – is related to citizens' mobilization in order to contribute to a better social life, to social change (whether by legitimising or delegitimising government, changing other people's lives, taking care of the environment, and so on). We are presenting our own political and theoretical stance right at the beginning following Weber's assertion that personal values are always integral to the selection of research topics in the social sciences, and should therefore be made clear (rather than swept under the rug) (Weber, 2001). This is, then, our starting point for the journey of revising the conceptualizations of political participation.

By digging into the literature, we realize that the definition of participation is largely ambiguous and dynamic. Yet, we believe that seeking conceptual boundaries is crucial, as the analysis of how citizens practice democracy largely depends on what counts as participation. If political participation is conceptualised in the most conventional way, we will be pointed towards consistent and worrisome patterns of decline; however, if it is defined in a broader, more inclusive fashion, we will speak instead about its dynamics, the changes it undergoes, and perhaps even of a

[7] http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/civic-engagement/

[8] https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168068690f

'participatory revolution' (Norris, 2002). Defining what we are talking about is, then, fundamental. In other words, "conclusions about important changes in democratic societies depend on the participation concept used" (van Deth, 2014, p. 2).

In 1967, Verba defined participation as "the processes through which citizens influence or control the decisions that affect them" (p. 54). This definition is in line with the promotion of social change, and the citizens' involvement in improving society and contributing to the processes that will eventually lead to such transformation. The most commonly mentioned form of participation is electoral turnout, regarded as the cornerstone of the democratic political process. In the literature one can find rather narrow views of political participation; in these cases, it is linked to traditional mechanisms and spheres such as voting or joining a political party (e.g., Riley et al., 2010). Taking Verba's definition as the starting point, political participation can be expanded considering the motivation behind the activity *per se*; that is, if a certain behaviour entails a political purpose (*influence* or *control* over the decisions that affect citizens), there are a number of political actions besides participation in electoral processes. Like in fiction, reality always surpasses social sciences' pace. When a person sets herself on fire as a form of political protest – as a Tunisian man did in December 2010, in an act of protest against police repression which generated a series of demonstrations that led to the end of the Tunisian dictatorship and the events afterwards designated as "the Arab Spring" – or when someone decides to boycott certain products for ethical and environmental reasons, should these actions be considered political? The motivation, aims and consciousness driving them are certainly political, as they pursuit social transformation, push towards democratic development, and influence decisions that affect the persons directly involved as well as fellow citizens.

Now that we have uncovered our vision regarding democratic participation, we will present some of the main distinctions/divisions that have been characterizing participation. We will not present typologies in the conventional way. Rather, typologies will appear in dialogue with each other insofar as they translate a particular vision of participation: should it be understood as civic and political?; does it refer to a set of behaviours?; does it make sense to speak of conventional and non-conventional participation?; should we organize it according to individual or collective spheres?

1.1.1. Participation: the 'in-between' and 'all-in' concept

"How would you recognize a mode of participation if you see one?" This is how van Deth (2014) starts his argument about the ambiguousness surrounding the concept of political participation. This drives the scholars' need to create and organize typologies that are comprehensive enough to grasp the wide range of forms of participation. Arnestein (1969)'s typology, for instance, presents participation according to eight ladders related to the control over the process and the outcomes of participation: two degrees corresponding to citizens' non-participation (manipulation, therapy), three degrees encompassing tokenistic forms of participation (consultation, placation, partnership) and the last levels referring to citizens' power (delegated power, citizen control). Pattie, Seyd and Whiteley (2003) propose a participation typology ranging from the individual-type activities, the contacts with public officials, and the collective actions; while Klandermans (1997, 2004) organises participation according to variations regarding the effort and the time duration of each activity. In its turn, Teorell, Torcal and Montero (2007)'s typology presents five dimensions that represent activities with different focus (electoral participation; consumer participation, party participation, protest activities and contact activities). More recently, Ekman and Amnå (2012) organise an integrative typology that includes not only the traditional and manifest forms of participation, but also the extra-parliamentary and illegal actions, as well as latent participation. On the other hand, van Deth (2014) presents a conceptual map of political participation, in which after reaching the minimalist definition of participation (behavioural, voluntarily, done by citizens, located in the sphere of government/state/politics) the definition progresses according to participation's targets and motivations. We do not describe in detail such typologies, as this has already been done elsewhere (e.g., Cornwall, 2008; Fernandes-Jesus, 2013). Rather, we seek to understand how current typologies differ regarding recurrent boundaries that emerge in discourses about participation.

The development of new forms of participation, not limited to vote anymore, has led researchers, especially from the fields of psychology and political science, to raise boundaries within participation, namely concerning: a) the civic and the political; b) the behavioural and the attitudinal c) the conventional and the non-conventional; d) the individual and the collective.

Civic and *Political* Participation

Some authors distinguish between 'civic' and 'political' forms of participation. Barrett and Zani (2015), for instance, use the term 'political participation' to refer to activities that intend to influence public policies (at the regional, national or supranational levels), either directly – affecting the making or implementation of such policies – or indirectly – influencing the selection of policy-makers (Verba et al., 1995). 'Civic participation', in its turn, is related to voluntary activity, entailing mostly a kind of community level involvement, in which the focus is helping others and solving community problems (Zukin et al., 2006). Therefore, civic participation is seen as including activities such as belonging to a community organization, helping neighbours and performing consumer activism; in its turn, political participation entails electoral behaviour, signing petitions and participating in political demonstrations. In his turn, Ben Berger (2009) considers Zukin's 'civic engagement' too broad a definition. In fact, Zukin and colleagues (2006) themselves had already pointed out to the lack of clarity in the boundaries between the political and the civic concerning the repertoires of engagement of American young people. Berger[9], advocating the end of *civic* engagement as a kind of umbrella term, conceptualizes political engagement as subsuming the former, "because if 'civic' is construed as 'relating to the city', then the polity subsumes the city. And if 'civic' is construed as 'relating to citizenship', then 'the political' encompasses issues relating to citizenship as well" (Berger, 2009, p. 341). Voting, donating money, and following politics through the mass media are examples of activities undertaken by political engagement. On other hand, Berger argues that social engagement encompasses all forms of associational involvement, commonly occurring without a political element, and, finally, moral engagement, which entails the support of a particular moral code or principles that may or may not accompany social or political engagement. Recently, van Deth (2014) presented a conceptual map of political participation that also tries to organize the field of participation, "avoiding purely subjective definitions" (p. 1). Like Berger, he seems to believe that contrasting the *civic* and the *political* may be confusing, as they often overlap. The same idea is expressed by Macedo and colleagues (2005, p.6) when they suggest "not to draw a sharp distinction between 'civic' and 'political' engagement because we recognize that politics and civil society are interdependent". For them, then, the conceptual distinction between civic

[9] Berger considers that civic engagement's term occults the kinds of engagement that really make democracy work: political, social and moral engagement, which despite being different can be combined.

and political participation makes no sense, as any activity focused either on "problem solving or helping the others" (Zukin et al, 2006, p. 7), or "*influencing the collective life of the polity*" (Macedo et al. 2005, p. 6; emphasis in original) is considered political participation.

Manifest and *latent* participation

Second, is participation a behavioural concept? In the discussion regarding the demarcation between civic and political participation, we oscillated between using the terms 'participation' and 'engagement' once we were following how the scholars, whose views were being discussed, refer to that. Van Deth (2014) draws a clear line here. For him, only 'activities' count as participation. Taking the case of abstention as an example, it has to involve the action of staying at home on an election day. On the other hand, Berger (2009) takes the concept of 'engagement' as entailing both attention and energy as the two "mainsprings of politics" (p. 335). Engagement, he explains, can mean only activity, only attention, or a combination of both. Therefore, when Berger talks about political engagement, he refers to "attentive activity directly involving the polity" (p. 341), accounting for the combination of attention and action. Such distinction between what manifestly involves activity and what only involves attention to political or civic issues is also drawn by Barrett and Zani (2015). They argue that although engagement typically involves participatory behaviours, not all kinds of engagement are behavioural. In other words, engagement with either the polity or a community can be simply cognitive and affective, without a behavioural component – for example, when someone pays attention to political events through media sources, holds opinions and discusses them with friends. In van Deth's point of view, having interest in politics does not constitute participation, and thus simple 'interest' is not considered in his typology. Contrariwise, Ekman and Amnå (2012) assert the importance of clearly distinguishing between manifest and latent forms of participation, arguing that taking latent forms of participation into account is crucial to better understand new forms of political behaviour. Going beyond Teorell, Torcal and Montero's typology (2007), which focuses on manifest participation, Ekman and Amnå emphasize the kinds of engagement that, although not necessarily and directly classified as political participation, might be of great importance in understanding it, as they are "pre-political" or "stand-by" kinds of engagement. At an individual level, latent political participation includes, for example, interest and attention to political or civic issues; whereas at collective level it encompasses, for example, life-style politics and voluntary

work. Yet, while van Deth (2014) follows the participation-as-an-activity conceptualization, guarding the distinction between effects and determinants of participation, the latent collective form of participation of Ekman and Amnå's typology (considered civic engagement) is integrated in van Deth's typology, as he does not regard volunteering work or belonging to community based organizations as latent forms of participation; rather, he sees them as a form of political participation aiming at solving problems at community, because he does not restrict the adjective 'political' to activities centred on the government and the State.

Conventional and *non-conventional* participation

The multiplicity of typologies and ways to define what participation is – civic and political, latent and manifest – clearly portrays how societal and political trends are rapidly changing, pressing scholars to follow up. Talking about conventional and non-conventional forms of participation is another piece of this expansion. Modes of participation directly related with the governmental arena are frequently named as 'formal political participation' (Ekman & Amnå, 2012), 'institutional modes of participation' (Hooghe & Quintelier, 2013), 'conventional forms of participation' (Barrett & Zani, 2015) or 'elite-directed action' (Inglehart & Catterberg, 2002). Voting in elections, being a member of a political party or donating money to political parties are examples of conventional forms of participation. The expansion of political repertoires has lead scholars to create new labels capable of including participatory modes intending to challenge, in some way, the nature of politics – what is named as 'contentious politics' (Tilly, 2008) or 'elite-challenging politics' (Inglehart & Catterberg, 2002). Barrett and Zani (2015) include in non-conventional forms of political participation activities such as participating in protests, wearing a symbol supporting a given political cause and doing illegal actions in support for a political cause (e.g., burning a national flag, throwing stones). Likewise, Bourne (2010) considers participation in demonstrations, barricading a community or blogging as unconventional participation. Other researchers consider activities that are specifically illegal or unlawful (e.g., writing graffiti or damaging property) as 'aggressive' (Opp et al., 1981; Muller, 1982) or simply 'illegal' (Lavricˇ et al. 2010) – different from conventional and non-conventional ways of legal political participation. However, as stressed by Norris (2002), if only conventional participation is considered, research "may seriously misinterpret evidence of an apparent civic slump" (p. 4). Almond and Verba (1963) have already addressed this issue a long time ago, stating that political

participation is not limited to legal or conventional activities (p. 148). As far as van Deth's typology (2014) is concerned, if the activity targets the political sphere in a broad sense, it is considered a mode of political participation. However, this division between conventional and non-conventional (including illegal) forms of participation remains controversial. Lamprianou (2013) argues that the distinction is elusive, as many acts considered unconventional – such as signing petitions or demonstrating – are increasingly more acceptable and widespread (Dalton, 2008; Linssen et al., 2011). Hence, according to Lamprianou (2013), this division is outdated, and it might even be redundant considering the contemporary political repertoires.

Individual and *collective* participation

All kinds of participation already mentioned may be, implicitly or not, either collective or individual (or both). In van Deth's typology, this is not a distinctive feature. For him, the defining criteria for political participation are, first, the locus, second, the target, and finally, the motivation behind the activity. In this line, political consumerism (buying or boycotting a product or brand with a political intention) fits into a "motivational definition of political participation" (p. 11). On the other hand, in their typology, Ekman and Amnå (2012) differentiate individual and collective forms of engagement and participation, and justify this choice by considering the changing values in postmodern societies and the replacement of collective by individual identities. This argument points to a social phenomenon that contextualizes the current transformations in participation modes, particularly the rise of 'life politics' or 'lifestyle politics' (Inglehart, 1997; Giddens 1991; Beck 1992). In Ekman and Amnå's typology, the kind of behaviours that can be subsumed under life-style politics can be considered either individual or collective: recycling is an individual form of latent political participation involving action (as well as watching TV when it comes to political issues); as collective forms of latent political participation, involving only attention and not action, the authors give the example of the right-wing skinhead scene or the left-wing anarcho-punk scene; boycotting and political consumption (as well as signing petitions) are considered an extra-parliamentary form of manifest political participation. Research focused on lifestyle politics, understood as a number of actions to promote social change through ethically and politically driven choices carried out in everyday life (e.g., Giddens, 1991), shows that this kind of politics is not only about the politization of the private sphere at an individual level. Rather, it also embodies a collective dimension, separately or cumulatively. Moor (2014) illustrates this fact

through the example of the French alternative food movement (Dubuisson-Quellier et al., 2011) that, on one hand, aims to directly promote social change by influencing people's consumption patterns and, on the other hand, intends to change public opinion, and ultimately pressure politicians to take action by conveying information and mobilizing towards a fair and just economy. In van Deth's typology, political consumerism, the only form of lifestyle politics mentioned, is defined as a type of political participation that has neither a political locus (politics/ government/ state) nor political targets (either governmental or communitarian) – that is why lifestyle politics falls into the motivational definition of political participation; that is, a non-political activity but a politically motivated act. Moor (2014) suggests that forms of lifestyle politics may be understood considering their complexity, and should be analysed one by one, as all of them are different. Taking the example of the French alternative food movement, it is suggested that it may be recognized as a form of action aiming to solve social problems by directly targeting the community, but also as an action that targets the State and the decision-making processes. Thus, lifestyle politics refers both to individual and collective behaviours defined as political actions and not only as expressive ones. It is the same with online political activism, which can take either expressive forms or be State-oriented (Hosch-Dayican, 2014). Online activism and lifestyle politics exemplify the fact that a certain kind of political action may be located in and/or targeted at more than one arena or actor. The multidimensionality of political participation must, then, be accounted for.

1.1.2. Participation: the 'interactional practice', and (thus) the 'in-motion' concept

The diffusion of political power promotes the expansion of targets and strategies of political participation (della Porta, 2013; Norris, 2002), making them hard to account for. Additionally, most of the times, different forms of participation are closely interwoven, at different levels. Authors tend to agree that political behaviours are dynamic and transferable between each other, representing a kind of continuum between modes of participation with a similar nature (Teorell et al., 2007), between the civic and political spheres of participation (Youniss et al., 2002), the online and offline dimensions (Livingstone, Bober, & Helspe, 2005), etc. Yet, scholars from political science and political psychology tend to add some order, or intelligibility, to a

phenomenon whose expressions are virtually endless. The fact that 'politics' or 'democracy' are contested concepts (Gallie, 1956) turns participation into a notion to which a universal accepted definition will never correspond (Uhlaner, 2001). However, this search for typologies is not so much of a concern in the sociological and anthropological fields. What seems to matter most there is to provide a thick description of how individuals, within particular contexts, make sense of politics and democracy. Groups, places and processes are the units of analysis in political sociology and anthropology (e.g., Blee & Currier, 2006; Baiocchi, 2005; Eliasoph, 1998). Thus, the organising criteria are about how citizens relate with the political power and, more importantly, about what happens in the space between citizens and the State (the negotiation process, the relationships between groups). From this viewpoint, everything is potentially political, even if it occurs at different levels.

Baiocchi and Connor (2008) take the study of politics broadly, as the study of "societal power (its distribution, reproduction, and transformation) and the structures, institutions, movements, and collective identities that both maintain and challenge it" (p. 140). They try to systematise the analytical objects present in sociological studies of politics. Therefore, the study of politics can mean focusing on 1) institutions, events or actors usually considered political (political actors and institutions), on 2) interactions between people and formal politics (encounters with political institutions or actors) and, finally, on 3) the relational dynamics involving events, institutions and actors that, somehow, are a consequence of politics (the lived experience of the political) – Baiocchi & Connor, 2008. Although most sociological work is related to more than one category, this exercise may be beneficial to illustrate what counts as participation in this epistemological field – especially because what constitutes the political is widened from one category to another. The study of social movements or civil society organizations falls into the first category, including research on volunteering and advocacy projects (Lichterman, 2005). The second category, moving towards the boundaries between actors and institutions, refers to 'the grey zones of politics', such as the clandestine links between looters, political activists and police in shaping collective violence (Auyero, 2007), or participants at the edge of social movements (Wolford, 2005). The third category, the one that adopts a wider understanding of what politics is, encompasses, for example, studies of political apathy (Eliasoph, 1998), with an analytical link to political processes and culture.

Looking at the political processes at a small scale, closely, as they happen, researchers do not separate 'forms' of participation, once what is at stake may be

negotiations and strategies, multiple relationships with political categories (the State, civil society, power) as they move from one context to another, from a level to the other. Studying politics, hence, can mean looking at "repertoires-in-the-making", that is, patterns of collective action and the way that micro-processes, citizen-state interactions, are influenced by structural changes and macro-processes; it can also mean analysing the "clandestine connections" that have to do with the aforementioned 'grey zone of politics'; or it can imply a focus on the "official rhetoric of everyday life", linking the discourses and practices of political leaders to the everyday life of ordinary people (Auyero, 2007, p. 3-6). Ultimately, then, the focus is on how the political categories of State, democracy, and politics are lived, interpreted and transformed – which could be about resistance, avoidance, engagement – through the observation of practices and performances.

Multiple scenarios are considered in order to make sense of politics as "a process where subjects interact with various political institutions, sites, and actors, from which the subject can desire, and be disciplined, to be a productive citizen, docile body, or even activist" (Baiocchi & Connor, 2008, p. 146). The concern in many studies is, then, to provide "transactional accounts", and not merely "systemic" or "dispositional" accounts (Tilly, 2005) in which the configurations of relationships turn out to be the main ontological domain (Desmond, 2014). For example, Anne Mische (2007), researching the political strategies of Brazilian socialists, includes their interaction with other groups and contexts of civil society, taking into account the structural conditions shaping their motivations and dynamics. The focus, then, is not only on behaviour, but rather on how people produce meanings out of transactional relations, and how contestations emerge, integrating power and conflict.

How people in their daily lives make sense of broader phenomena is the main goal of political sociology; that is, how the official rhetoric impacts and is transformed by/in peoples' lives (Wedeen, 1999). Participation, then, acquires a more flexible meaning. Expanded from a minimalistic definition of public sphere – where there is 'civic-minded talk' – this can encompass a website, a public place, or domains from private life (Eliasoph, 2004). Studying politics, then, means "studying practices and processes connected to democracy, citizen activities, and the public sphere" (Luhtakallio, 2012, p. 11). To this aim, the subjective interpretation of politics and participation is crucial. First, to understand how people participate entails the recognition that "the boundary between civic activity and politics is constantly redefined, as people act out their value of active citizenship and community-

mindedness" (Baiocchi et al., 2014, p. 13). Secondly, focusing on intersubjective and interactional patterns to understand the influential dynamics in the 'collective fabric', implies to "concentrate neither on the utterly subjective feelings and meanings, nor on the 'objective', structural explanations. Instead, analysis should focus on interactional, inter-subjective patterns and the different ways these patterns tie people together and make them engage in joint efforts" (Luhtakallio, 2012, p. 26). In listening to debates, following activists, participating in events, sociologists often come to understand that "fundamentally different assumptions about what engagement is, what it is for, and how it works (or does not)" coexist (Baiocchi et al., 2014, p. 55). Framing and linking processes is, then, crucial, as political engagement results from "both antecedent causes and projective purposes" (Jackson, 1996, p. 6). Subjective meanings and understandings are, then, crucial.

How groups of people practice democracy, in what ways they politicize things, and how these processes develop (Luhtakallio, 2012); or what sort of political culture has evolved in a given civil society (Baiocchi, 2005) are some of the questions that political sociologists raise. In formulating the answer, multiple connections are made (with macro and micro-governing processes and political narratives), while they follow different groups of people and hear them voicing concerns, developing ties and getting involved. Participation is very much defined in a relational perspective. It is not only a matter of behaviours; rather, it involves understanding individuals' perspectives and the particular ways they perform (Wedeen, 2009). This does not mean that one cannot find common definitions of participation among different research fields. Baiocchi and colleagues (2014), for example, shedding light on the American political culture through ethnographies conducted in several civic sites and groups, start by foregrounding their understanding of civic and political participation. They follow the work of Berger (2009) to include as "civic" activities 1) political actions (e.g., voting, participation in campaigning); 2) community building (membership in voluntary associations, lobby groups, and social affairs); 3) values, morals, knowledge and skills (e.g., volunteering and reading the news). Furthermore, they use "political engagement" and "political participation" in accordance with Zukin's (2006) definition: activities intending to influence the State, either directly or indirectly. Yet, they were particularly attentive to the ways people construct popular definitions of politics and democracy while they interact with others. In sum, studying participation entails looking at how people experience democracy (the gap between what they imagine and how things happen) (Polletta, 2013), and exploring political cultures, as they often overlap – diverse

political practices, animated by different meanings that people attribute in their day-to-day political expressions and understandings about what participation means (Baiocchi, 2005, 2014).

What is participation, again?

Different research fields (sociology, anthropology, political science and psychology), take participation in relation to broader theoretical concepts (e.g., the State, the community, democracy) – focusing on how people produce meanings about them and how frequently they perform political and civic behaviours. Recalling the above-mentioned anchor definition of participation – "the processes through which citizens influence or control the decisions that affect them" (Verba, 1967, p. 54)[10] – it is crucial, then, to account for how people interpret their roles in influencing such decisions, the main forms adopted towards such goal and what people learn throughout this process (the pedagogical potential of participation). From here, we can account for 'participation'. It may look like we are going back to the beginning of this chapter, but the fact is that participation is "a bundle of many different things: from public and community participation to civic or political participation, it involves many somewhat distinct and sometimes overlapping kinds of actions, contexts" (Ferreira, Coimbra, & Menezes, 2012, p. 125).

Back in 1967, Verba shed light on the participation crisis, explaining it was due to the fact that "three matters are being raised at the same time: new people want to participate, in relation to new issues and in new ways" (Verba, 1967, p. 54). The more we narrow our definition of participation, the less we will be able to grasp such 'crisis'. Hence, participation should be understood less from an 'orthodox view' and more from an 'ample view' (Ribeiro, 2014). On the other hand, the wider the concept of participation, the less heuristically useful will it be. This may seem contradictory, but it is not. What is crucial, and what may be the solution to this apparent paradox, is that the concept is able to describe accurately whatever is going on in the public sphere. Thus, the concept is a framework for assessing the world. As such, any given phenomenon can only be considered *participation* if it translates into actual observable/accountable behaviour, is politically-driven, and somehow aspires to produce change. Participation

[10] Although Verba's definition is useful and broadly used in the literature, we should stress that the notion of participation guiding this research is not limited and restricted to the legal status of citizenship.

should be understood as an inter-relational behaviour – participatory behaviours most often take place in conjunction with and emerge in relation to others. Furthermore, it should be based on political goals and motivations, entailing the pursuit of social change (be it local, national or global). According to Arendt's (1968) understanding of political action, it is the manifestation and contestation of principles that defines what politics is; the continuous articulation of principles through action revitalises the public realm and shapes conditions for future action. "The world, in gross and in detail, is irrevocably delivered up to the ruin of the time unless human beings are determined to intervene, to alter, to create, what is new", Arendt wrote (1968, p. 189). This act of intentional change and creation and the assumption that politics is inevitably relational (Arendt, 2001 [1958]) and, therefore, a realm of human conflict (Mouffe, 2005) and dissensus (Rancière, 2010), sustains the notion of participation we outlined just above. Participation should, then, entail action towards social change, in relation to others, as it relies on "the very condition of plurality" (Arendt, 2001 [1958], p. 234).

We can only foresee the future of democracies if citizens, effectively, participate. For this, of course, paying attention to how people imagine a better world and to the levels of interest and attention citizens display is fundamental. But we should be capable, then, to understand how 'imaginations' – in Castoriadis' terms (1994), involving both imagining new worlds and instituting them – and engagements are brought to democratic life (or not). Multidisciplinary efforts can prove vital to tie up loose ends. In this regard, an educational approach to participation is also necessary, in order to understand the potential of participation experiences in terms of personal transformation. We are referring to the very definition of education, as proposed by Dewey (1916), which entails the "reconstruction or reorganisation of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience" (p. 70). This consideration of the opportunities that participation may entail to learn about democratic citizenship and to promote a more complex understanding of the world is, then, crucial – later in this chapter, this debate will be developed.

This section, in which we tried the exercise of thinking about participation in more abstract terms, is actually preparing the terrain for the next section, about youth participation as social phenomenon that must be discussed in context and in relation to other kinds of framing factors: individual, structural, demographic, social, psychological, emotional, and so on. For decades, several participatory models and typologies have contributed to explaining participation through different angles: the

combination between effort and time (Klanderman, 1997, 2004); the importance of political knowledge and information (Dalton, 2002); the role of individual resources and networks (e.g., Scholzman, et al., 1994); the perceptions about the political and the economic system (Gurr, 1970; Muller, 1979); citizens' power in determining the outcome of participation (Arnestein's typology, 1969), etc. We consider that the usefulness of such dimensions can be more thoroughly appreciated when understanding participation in context rather than in mere conceptual debates. Thus, we will move from a conceptual and abstract review to the discussion of participation in context, in relation to youth – spotlighted as an age group undergoing a complex political, social and economic crisis (OECD, 2016).

1.2. Youth and Politics: a story of crises, transformations and demands

"Young people are unsatisfied with democracy". This is one of the conclusions of a study commissioned by the Presidency of the Portuguese Republic, as reported by a Portuguese newspaper in May, 2015[11]. The study analyses youngsters' attitudes towards politics: only 17,3% of Portuguese youngsters aged between 15 and 34 years old consider that democracy works well in Portugal; and 57% of those aged between 15 and 24 years old have no interest in politics. More recently, another widely circulated newspaper came up with a worrisome headline: "Young people are giving up on politics, and politics seems to ignore them" (January, 2016)[12]. This article was based in an Eurostat survey after the European elections of May 2014, in which only 19% of the Portuguese people aged 18-24 admitted having voted, as opposed to the European average of 28%. The article suggests that there is the risk that political parties find it useless to persuade young people to vote. In the article, the campaign director of one of the presidential candidates stressed that "with the progressive alienation of young people, there is the risk that political parties start to look at them as a rhetorical instrument, mainly to reach their parents' and grandparents' vote"[13]. The gap between institutional politics and young people is, then, getting severely aggravated, a transversal trend over Europe and beyond. The disbelief in political institutions and the opinion that voting is inconsequential are the main reasons pointed out in this study.

Young people, then, are under the spotlight regarding participation and its importance in legitimizing democracy. We cannot ignore the fact that political discourses are mainly focused on the matter of voter turnout, as its severe decrease puts at risk democracy as we know it – as a representative political system. Yet, the previous section in this chapter shows that participation, and therefore the relationship between citizens and the public sphere, goes way beyond voter turnout. The crisis-of-participation-talk must, therefore, be contextualized; in this case, particularly regarding young people. Pippa Norris (2002, p. 20) sought to explain political activism through a broad scheme entailing a macro-level, related to societal modernization (socioeconomic

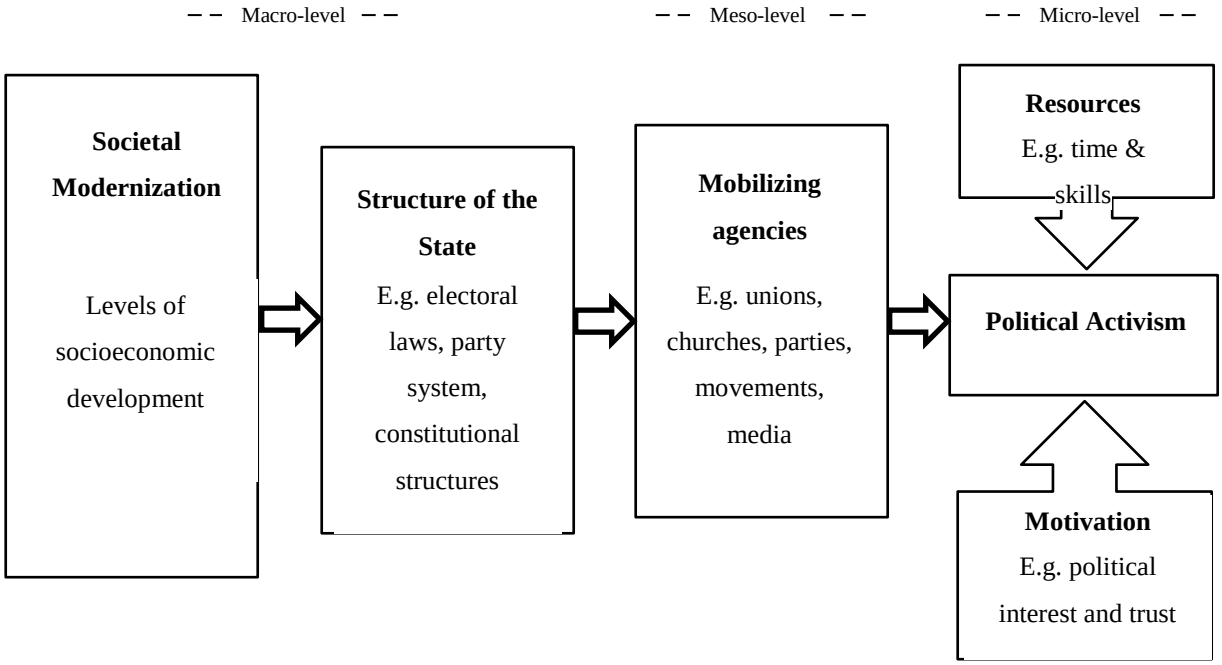
[11] "57% dos jovens entre os 15 e os 24 anos sem qualquer interesse em política", Diário de Notícias, May, 15th 2015: http://www.dn.pt/inicio/portugal/interior.aspx?content_id=4570304

[12] "Os jovens estão a desistir da política, e a política parece prescindir deles", Jornal Público, January, 31st 2016: https://www.publico.pt/politica/noticia/os-jovens-estao-a-desistir-da-politica-e-a-politica-parece-prescindir-deles-1721887

[13] Author's translation

levels) and the State's structure (e.g., electoral laws, the party system); a meso-level that includes the mobilizing agencies (e.g., unions, movements); and, finally, a micro-level that integrates two factors converging to political activism: resources (e.g., time and skills) and motivation (e.g., political interest and trust).

Figure 1: Norris' (2002) theoretical framework



Discussing the challenges currently faced by young people, and the ways socioeconomic development is impacting youths' pathways and life trajectories is an appropriate starting-point in order to locate their relationship with politics. Norris's framework starts by recalling the modernization theories advanced by scholars such as Ronald Inglehart (1997) and Russell Dalton (2002), who highlighted the role of social trends, such as standards of living and educational opportunities, on a new style of relationship between citizens and politics in western democracies. This process is characterized by new demands regarding public participation through direct action and new social movements, and simultaneously weakening support of traditional hierarchical organizations and authorities (Norris, 2002). Modernization theories are rooted in the sociological works of Max Weber (1978) and Emile Durkheim (1991), and focus on the patterns of economic, cultural and political changes in societies that impact on democratisation processes.

The great recession in 2008 caused a huge economic crisis at the global scale, in which young people were severely hit. Eight years after, across the OECD countries there are about 40 million young people who are neither employed nor in education or training (NEET) (OECD, 2016), and have particularly low levels of participation in political life (Cammaerts, et al., 2015)[14]. Portugal, along with Slovenia, Italy and Latvia, is one of the countries where between one-quarter and one-third of all jobs held by young people were destroyed (OECD, 2016). Considering the strong impacts of economic shocks on democratic support and satisfaction (Córdova & Seligson, 2010; Armingeon & Guthmann, 2014), the legitimacy of democracy is clearly at stake. Additionally, such concerns are worsened when the Government's performance is continuously in crisis, as it is the case in Portugal, with unemployment, public deficit and debt having reached historical maxima in the past few years (de Sousa, Magalhães, & Amaral, 2014). Furthermore, OECD data (2016) show that social safety nets are quite ineffective in fighting poverty among young people, and it is estimated that one in every eight young person lives in poverty – a rate higher than the older groups. One of the great challenges for governments in the years to come is to approach young people, helping them overcome the obstacles to education and employment, supporting their lives' transitions (OECD, 2016); that is, to demonstrate to youngsters that democracy still represents them.

The post-crisis recovery has been slow, even more so for countries like Portugal, that was already characterized by not having a welfare system capable of integrating economic and social unpredictability (Esping-Andersen, 1990), which therefore limited opportunities and access to participation (Champeix, 2010). Considering this socioeconomic scenario, youngsters in Portugal and in many other countries have been living their youth based on the lack of future prospects and, thus, non-linear transitions to adulthood (Hoikkala, 2009). For them, "the terrain in which transitions take place is of an increasingly labyrinthine nature" (Pais, 2006). In Portugal, the youth emigration rate is currently a major problem currently (Docquier & Rapoport, 2011). This generation of emigrants, contrary to those in the past, is composed of highly educated youngsters facing either unemployment or extremely precarious labour conditions. This growing uncertainty keeps youngsters away from leaving parental home, while those who work tend to have poor-quality jobs, be in temporary contracts and earn lower

[14] In what concerns the concept of NEET, Yates and Payne (2006) caution that its use may be problematic given the negative label attributed to young people under such umbrella, and also because it may obscure the heterogeneity of situations and difficulties lived by young people.

wages lower than older workers. For young people who began their adolescence in a scenario of crisis, a future in emigration is already part of their collective imaginary and they often find the school system purposeless (Allen & Ainley, 2011). In sum, an entire generation does not identify itself with the current system and does not trust political institutions, and this state of affairs inflicts long-term scars on social cohesion: periods of unemployment in early adulthood have negative effects on future employment prospects (OECD, 2016), and the relationship with politics during adolescence strongly predicts political behaviours and attitudes in adulthood (Sherrod et al., 2002; Verba et al., 1995). In this regard, there are other macro-contextual factors that are important to consider, such as the fragile Portuguese political culture (Cruz, 1985), due to the recency of its recent democratic system, which was not established until 1974. The longevity of a country's democracy (related to more political participation), as well as the structure of institutions (e.g., the decentralization of the State's power being correlated with higher levels of participation) are crucial elements in interpreting political and civic participation, influencing citizens' opportunities and abilities to participate (Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Vráblíková, 2013).

With their lives in stand-by, young people may feel that their difficulties are not adequately addressed by social structures, and thus develop the notion that they cannot rely on them. They live in an individualization period (Griffin, 2005), in which "the *places* to which the individuals may gain access and in which they may wish to settle are melting fast and can hardly serve as targets for 'life projects'" (Bauman 2009, p. 5, emphasis in the original). Furthermore, the more individualistic a society becomes, the higher the danger of blaming individuals for their own problems, individualizing responsibilities for failures and exclusions (Ryan, 1971; Bourdieu, 1998). Individualization is a phenomenon discussed by sociologists and related to 'late modernity', 'neo-liberalism' and 'reflexive modernity' (Beck, 2005; Rose, 1989; Giddens, 1991). It brings about significant changes in contemporary societies, namely regarding the ways citizens relate with each other and live their citizenship. The youth of today, born after the 80's, known as the 'Y generation', experiences all these challenges and distant opportunities (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997).

1.2.1. Complexifying the 'crisis': new ways of relating to politics

These contextual elements are fundamental to learn how today's youths make choices, relate with others, and position themselves in the world. Social scientists, then, should be capable of seeing and describing what is happening, wherever it is happening, as "it is in their contexts that youngsters look for original ways to do their place in the world, that is, not to lose their contact with the world and the others"[15] (Silva, 2011, p.12). This is the reason why neither generational nor class theories are suitable to approach the diversity in youth: the first because they see it as a phase of life and a homogeneous group; the latter because they are limited by a deterministic view (Pais, 1996). To go beyond the labels regarding youth political apathy and inactivity it is crucial to recognize the agency of individuals in constructing their own paths and choices in a specific cultural, economic and social context.

In order to appropriately analyse participatory trends, the scope must be as wide as possible, moving beyond labels and binary lenses. This is crucial in order not to fall into restricted understandings of citizenship and obsolete analyses of participation, failing to grasp the complexity of behaviours and modes of relationship with politics. Rather, citizenship is something that is materialized in each and every moment of activity or inactivity, as nobody is entirely active or inactive at all moments (Rosanvallon, 2006). Citizenship needs to be understood not as an achievement, but rather as a practice (Lawy & Biesta, 2006). In this process we may find that political disaffection can mean ways of negotiating freedoms framed by a risk society (Beck, 2001; Harris, 2006). For about a decade, scholars have emphasized that youngsters are shifting away from institutional forms of participation (Barrett & Zani, 2015; Menezes et al., 2012b; Harris, Wyn and Younes, 2010; Norris, 2002). In Portugal, participatory trends are defined by a preference for horizontal decision making-mechanisms, with youngsters being closer to membership in associations (Augusto 2008; Menezes, 2003; Magalhães & Moral, 2008) and involvement in students' councils and environmental organisations (Menezes, 2003; Dias & Menezes, 2013).

This generational transformation in the relationship with politics is characterized by estrangement from the traditional "politics of loyalties" and the parallel rise of new repertoires and agencies related to a "politics of choice" (Norris, 2004), in which post-materialist values guide political behaviours and interests (Inglehart, 1990). It turns out, then, that the 'Y generation' may not be lost (Allen & Ainley, 2011), but

[15] Author's translation

rather refocused, favouring more specific issues and campaign-like actions, more related to environmental protection or human rights (Harris, Wyn & Younes, 2010). The 'Y Generation', or the 'Millennials', are growing up in an age where technologies, and the transparency they promote, take on a relevant role, contextualized by some major social challenges such as humanitarian crises, terrorism, the great recession, and climate change (Gilman & Stokes, 2014). Although this generation may "have the potential to be a potent political force", as they are a large generational block, they do not vote, preferring instead more fluid relations with politics and modes of participation that, for them, seem more effective in dealing with the issues they believe to be most important (Gilman & Stokes, 2014, p. 57).

Farthing (2010), drawing from Beck's (2001) theory on the consequences of the risk society for the youth, talks about "radically unpolitical young people" (p. 188). He claims that young people relate to politics in ways that are unique to this generation, in opposition to analyses of young people's politics in relation to binary and, in some way, adult-centric visions of what politics and democracy should be (Beck, 2001). The trend towards the 'individualization' and 'personalization' of politics (McDonald, 2006; Norris, 2004) is a major feature of the change in which people organize and act. Young people are not disengaged; rather, they understand, define and live politics in new and diverse ways (O'Toole et al., 2003). Such participatory activities may entail behaviours linked to consumption (e.g., boycotting products for ethical reasons), targeting spheres other than State (e.g., corporations, supranational governance structures), going beyond geographical boundaries (e.g., alter-globalization movements) and platforms (offline and online). Democracy is understood and lived in extended and deepened versions. Thus, approaching youth participation necessarily entails looking not only at its levels, but also at particular understandings and attitudes of politics and citizenship, often outside formalized structures (e.g., Andolina et al., 2002; O'Toole, et al., 2003; MacKinnon et al., 2007).

The results of a multinational research project, involving 9 European countries, including Portugal[16], that sought to analyse the processes influencing democratic ownership and participation (PIDOP), highlight that young people under 25 are less likely to vote and getting involved in conventional activities in all countries, and that interest in politics and internal political efficacy boost all forms of participation – voting, conventional, non-conventional and civic (Barrett & Zani, 2015). External

[16] PIDOP participating countries: Belgium, Czech Republic, England, Germany, Italy, Northern Ireland, Portugal, Sweden and Turkey

efficacy increases the involvement in conventional and non-conventional activities, and voting is directly influenced by institutional trust. Concerning specifically the Portuguese results, the main findings show that young people's feeling about being perceived as having no credibility in the public sphere, together with low individual and family resources (economic and educational), impact negatively their opportunities to participate (Fernandes-Jesus et al., 2015). The Portuguese youths do not feel their opinions are taken into account, displaying however a wide and diverse range of local participation experiences (Menezes et al., 2012b). This shows that the predictive factors of Portuguese youth participation are quite diverse, and also that "the very meanings of democratic participation are elaborated differently according to individuals' life experiences" (Menezes et al., 2012b, p. 20) Research, then, shows how diverse youth participation experiences are influenced by a complex interaction of multiple factors associated to each group's specificities and the resources they have access to.

1.2.2. Discussing inequality in participation

The relationship between youth and politics is inevitably influenced by the interplay between the individual and the structure (Lopes, Bentonb & Cleaver, 2009). Therefore, to explain participation it is important to understand the reasons of individuals' choices, such as getting involved in collective action, of which perceived injustice, perceived efficacy and collective identity are important predictors (Klanderman, 1997, 2002). Moreover, the level of cognitive involvement is fundamental for participation, as information and political knowledge strongly predict interest in social and political issues (Dalton, 2002). Regarding the models that put structure at the forefront of participation trends, civic voluntarism and equity-justice models should be highlighted. The first stresses the importance of the resources owned by each individual (influenced by socioeconomic status, level of education, free time), and also the networks he/she belongs to which promote mobilisation, self-efficacy and motivation to participate (Scholzman, et al., 1994; Verba et al., 1995). The second model emphasizes the way individuals perceive the political and economic system in terms of fairness and equity (Gurr, 1970; Muller, 1979).

These models and theories should be articulated as they are framed by and influence each other, either by zooming in or out of participation trends and patterns, namely regarding young people. In balancing the benefits and costs of participation, the

individual may consider the level of government's responsiveness (or other political target at stake), as well as social and economic barriers to get involved. Likewise, the perception of the social and economic system as increasingly unfair may fuel participation, but also contribute to cynicism regarding political institutions and the very notion of common wellbeing. In fact, each individual's social position strongly impacts his/her ability to navigate through participatory spheres and organisations. The educational level and the socioeconomic status are classical predictors of political efficacy, political interest and participation (e.g., Wu, 2003; Karp & Banducci, 2008; Lopes et al., 2009; Almond & Verba, 1963; Stone & Schaffner, 1988). They are also correlated with political literacy and the even with educational expectations, which in turn influence participatory dispositions (Torney-Purta, 2002a). Political interest, attentiveness and political efficacy are strongly related to electoral participation (e.g.; Brady et al., 1995; van Deth & Elff, 2004), the latter being also a strong predictor of protest behaviour (e.g., Spannring et al., 2008). Family and school contexts are significant sources of influence regarding such psychological variables, despite the non-linearity of such effects. The mass media, for example, may foster political interest and attentiveness (Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Zukin et. al., 2006) but be irrelevant or counterproductive regarding taking action (Livingstone & Markham, 2008). The cultural resources of families are of great relevance in explaining youth participation and civic knowledge (Torney-Purta, 2002a; Verba, Burns & Scholzman, 2003). Family climate predicts civic knowledge, political literacy, internal efficacy and trust in institutions (Azevedo & Menezes, 2007), with family participatory habits being reproduced through the offspring (Niemi & Jennings, 1991; Jennings, 2002). Also, the relationship with peers is related to civic participation (e.g., Wentzel & McNamara, 1999) and knowledge (Torney-Purta, 2002a).

All these factors and contexts, as well as the complex inter-relations between them, define the space and the boundaries of social practices. Bourdieu's (2010 [1979]) definition of *habitus*, closely connected with social class, enables grasping how individuals accumulate certain kinds of capitals through interactional practices that take place in specific social arenas, thereby influencing social practices. Although this analytical model entails weaknesses and limitations, underestimating the agency of individuals, it can be useful to consider participation as a field that values certain kinds of capital, producing and reproducing them, and also as a kind of symbolic market that is capable of reconverting any given type of capital into other fields. The literature is unequivocal in pointing out that uneven distributions of socioeconomic resources are

reproduced in participation (e.g., Schlozman, Verba & Brady, 1999; Badescu & Neller, 2007). Economic inequalities have a causal effect on social capital (Oxendine, 2004; Uslaner & Dekker, 2001) and on satisfaction with democracy (Torcal & Magalhães, 2010). At the same time, participation in voluntary associations may be happening mostly through financial contributions (Morales & Geurts, 2007), as lack of time is one of the reasons most frequently referred to justify the absence of active participation (Malafaia, 2011). Thus, one may opt for not spending time while participating (Norris, 2002), as money can substitute time (Putnam, 2000). Scholzman, Burns and Verba (1994) emphasize the role of resources (be they time, money or civic skills) in political activity. Civic skills are presented as resources that, according to these authors, derive from experiences at home and at school, the position in the labour market and the affiliation to voluntary associations and religious organisations (Scholzman et al., 1994). People with higher levels of resources (money, education) often belong to strong social networks that offer them access to opportunities and information (Verba et al. 1995; Cohen et al., 2001); also, they tend to have more free time to participate (Brady et al., 1995).

Thus, recurrently, people who participate more are those who already belong to participatory networks that stimulate their disposition to get involved (Malafaia, 2011; Van Der Meer & Van, 2009). Economic, social and educational capitals are, then, closely intertwined. Additionally, it must be considered how well social structures are able to alleviate economic recessions and how severe the gap is between the rich and the poor. Despite the claims advocating the end of social classes (Pakulski & Waters, 1996), groups continue to have unequal opportunities to participate, and even if new tools such as the internet may foster the democratisation of participation (Malafaia et al., 2013), they may also deepen global, social and democratic divides (Norris, 2001). In any case, citizens who have few resources at their disposal and occupy vulnerable social positions will have difficulties in getting involved in political and civic matters.

1.2.3. Mobilizing and sharing power: "*Youth participation does not come cheap anymore*"

Considering the participatory trends discussed above, reconceptualising youth civic and political participation has to take into account the possibility of the youngsters' active rejection of traditional ways of doing politics. Power is the core of politics, but in the

current youth political agenda it is deeply transformed, dispersed and takes on global dimensions (Beck, 2001). National governments, in their turn, reveal themselves increasingly unable to tackle the political agenda of the youth. It is no surprise, then, that at the outset of 2011, Portuguese youngsters joined a wave of global protests and associated their concerns with those of other European youngsters affected by the economic crisis. In 2011 and 2012, millions of youngsters took the streets denouncing labour and material problems (Estanque, Costa, & Soeiro, 2013), the decline of the quality of democracy and the fiscal measures implemented by the Government, which hit hard an already 'strained generation' [*Geração à Rasca*] (de Sousa, Magalhães, & Amaral, 2014). These are two parallel trends: youth political agendas are mainly global in their nature, because they regard power as more horizontal and diffused; in national terms, however, youths are also attentive. Indeed, they do not feel represented by institutional politics – which was one of the messages conveyed by such demonstrations. In their turn, governments may feel at a loss in attracting the involvement of young people as they seem more interested in writing in blogs, sharing news on Facebook, engaging in global media movements and living politics in their own ways. Then, fear emerges about how these new forms of participation contribute to democracy; that is, when people stop voting and engaging with formal politics, there is an undeniable democratic deficit that has to be considered (Farthing, 2010).

Following Norris' framework, portrayed above, the mobilising agencies are crucial elements in promoting political activism. Political parties, for example, are either making little effort to attract young people (Forbrig, 2005) or having trouble to present themselves as legitimate arenas of political power (Mycock & Tonge, 2012). Joining online forums and engaging in world-wide networks to advocate given causes (e.g., environment, social equality) made social networks important mobilising agencies, gathering people around common causes, and in some cases this transferred to the streets (Castells, 2012). As already mentioned, the non-hierarchical and less bureaucratic shape of the online sphere became very attractive (Inglehart, 1997). Therefore, such transformation points to the fact that youth participation also depends a lot on structural conditions, including the degree of openness of democratic institutions and participation channels to include young people (Forbrig, 2005). Peter Lauritzen (Directorate of Youth and Sport Council of Europe) refers to youth participation as something that "does not come cheap anymore", as "it has to be won in the context of a real offer to share power" (Forbrig, 2005, p. 5). Clearly, traditional mobilising structures and agencies do not meet the expectations of today's youngsters, who continue to be

treated as ‘citizens-in-the-making’ (Marshall, 1950, p. 25) and pre-political subjects (Kuhar, 2005). Verba, Scholzman and Brady (1995) have already stated that for individuals to participate, first, they should be asked to or targeted by mobilisation efforts. That is, if democratic leaders want to sustain governmental legitimacy, pulling new generations into the representative system, the system must be willing to share power with the youngsters. Such willingness should include opening up the analysis beyond the one-sided explanations for the downward trend in participation (Skocpol, 1999, 2003). The instrumentalisation of young people as voters will continue to keep them away from political parties and organizations. As highlighted by Amnå and Ekman (2015), some transformation is required when the parties and the political organizations are conveying messages to young people that actually devalue them: ‘We want you as (passive) supporters, and as voters on Election Day, but please do not bother to get involved in our daily activities’ (p. 106).

The importance of mobilization is underlined by several researchers who stress the role of politicians, voluntary groups, media and activists on socialising for political participation (e.g., Norris 2002; Rosenstone & Hansen 2003; Teorell 2003; Uhlaner 1989; Diani & McAdam 2003; Verba et al., 1995). Politicised networks, as well as political attitudes, are more easily developed at an early age, remaining throughout adulthood, and making youngsters who are not politically mobilised more likely to continue to be untargeted by any political mobilisation effort when they grow older (Hooghe & Stolle, 2003). In order to promote political participation, Deželan (2015) claims the need for a strategy capable of meeting the multidimensionality of participation, without paternalism or tokenism. Mobilising strategies must necessarily entail a horizontal dialogue and bottom-up definitions of common good. In an attempt to tackle individual and structural problems regarding youth participation, a document emerged from the European Youth Forum (2015) that draws some recommendations, such as fostering partnerships between formal and non-formal education contexts, promoting mechanisms of participatory policy-making by young people across various policy fields and levels (e.g., participatory budgeting at the local level), increasing voter information and education campaigns, lowering the voting age to 16 years old (Deželan, 2015). Likewise, the United Nations Development Programme (2013) expresses concern regarding the very fact that a fifth of the world’s population (youngsters aged between 15 and 25) is not formally represented in national political institutions and does not vote, despite being involved in informal politics and civically engaged. Thus, this document comes up with strategies to be implemented throughout the electoral cycle,

such as the alignment of the minimum age to vote and to run for governmental offices, the facilitation of registrations of youth organizations, the encouragement of youth participation and civic education in schools, providing support to small-scale youth projects, using online platforms for politically engaged youth to share knowledge and get connected, supporting the development of youth wings of political parties, promoting youth involvement in voter education campaigns, developing multimedia strategies and interactive online tools to engage youth, supporting youth councils at the local level and promoting internship schemes for students in parliaments.

Such recommendations address the promotion of youth participation, acknowledging that sharing power is essential to include youngsters. The discussion about fostering youth participation and including youngsters in decision-making processes necessarily entails the enhancement of institutional opportunities. However, it is not limited to that. Mobilisation and inclusion must encompass social and economic inequalities that often transpire to participatory arenas. Mobilisation campaigns, social networks, and information about spheres and processes of participation frequently reach the groups that are, in some way, already under their scope. As Kinder (1998) puts it, mobilisation – and, therefore, inclusion in power sharing dynamics – usually follows the social organisation already established in everyday life. In order to get closer to youths, democracy should not be limited to political decision making, but rather include the experiences in the construction and transformation of society and how youngsters may feel included in that process (Bernstein, 2000).

1.2.4. Challenges to democracy

There is a number of factors (macro, demographic, social, psychological) that help explaining the relationship between youth and politics, specifically their levels and forms of civic and political participation. The world is continuously changing, and so do the patterns of such relationship. Yet, despite the vast range of studies that have been focused on this subject over the past years, some of them mentioned in this section, further research is needed in order to better address some gaps. For example, research leading to a more comprehensive analysis of the processes currently driving young people away from conventional political participation while simultaneously getting closer to other forms (Barrett & Zani, 2015), and a deeper understanding of actual participatory behaviors, rather than simply the intentions to participate (Stürmer et al.,

2003). An integrative approach, considering macro, meso and micro levels of analysis is crucial to get the full picture. That is, the structural conditions, the socio-psychological factors, the mobilisation efforts have to be all taken into account and, consequently, only the combination of multiple disciplines and methods can address such task.

Although youth participation has been characterised by new forms and contexts of expression, doing away with labels of apathy and disinterest, the fact is that young people are not voting, despite revealing attention to and interested in politics. So, while we could focus only on the bright side of the relationship between youngsters and politics, emphasising their creative forms of engagement, the loud concerns about the consequences of the historically low levels of voter turnout are unavoidable (e.g., International IDEA 2008; Gilman & Stokes, 2014). Tackling this problem will require transforming their perception that traditional forms of participation are inadequate to influence policy making, and for that a structural change needs to take place, as politicians must represent them. Research has been emphasizing that youngsters do not feel their voices are effectively heard, neither specifically by policy-makers (e.g., Harris, Wyn and Younes, 2010), nor more generally by adult discourses that are punctuated by generational comparisons and the 'old-is-gold' talks (Malafaia et al., 2012). Consequently, they feel unrepresented and disbelieved in what they regard as the old participatory arenas. Furthermore, and despite the different effects of psychological and social factors across countries, participation is necessarily dependent on the broader socio-political structure of each country (Barrett & Zani, 2015). All of this obviously produces vicious circles: as young people become less and less relevant for political parties, they will continue disengaged and, consequently, less youngsters will be chosen by political parties and the interest of young people will be increasingly less represented (Valente & Cunha, 2014). The socio-political climate must be taken into account when considering more youth-friendly strategies to get young people closer to traditional forms of participation, and accountability, transparency and responsiveness are also essential in this. A study conducted by Magalhães and Sanz Moral (2008) is quite unequivocal in this respect: although Portuguese youngsters are skeptical regarding conventional participation, they favour the creation of new political structures that are capable of introducing more direct democracy and participate more than adults.

Scholars talk about a post-political culture to discuss this turn away from politics and towards the community as a form of citizens keeping themselves away from what they consider the malfunctions of public life (Calhoun, 1998; Rose, 1999). This post-political culture is based in an overestimation of the power and internal democratic

values of local and communitarian associations (Herbert, 2005; Macedo et al., 2005; Verba et al., 1995). Critics of the post-political argue, however, that by disavowing politics, citizens are also turning their back on the central struggles of democracy, such as inequality and belonging, resting instead on romanticised notions of community that cannot, and will not, replace a much needed political discourse (Žižek, 1999; Mouffe, 2000).

1.3. Post-democracy: the debasing of participatory culture?

"Is there life after democracy?", Arundhati Roy asks at the very beginning of her book 'Field notes on democracy: listening to grasshoppers' (2009). Referring to the working model in which the Western liberal democracy is based on, she argues that "the system of representative democracy – too much representation, too little democracy – needs some structural adjustment" (p. 2). The previous section has portrayed the citizens' generalized discontent with the quality of democracy, and their demands for a full representative democracy and more direct, horizontal mechanisms of participation. Yet, notwithstanding the worrying signs concerning the way democracy is working, overall it tends to be taken as "the only game in town" (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 5). However, considering the way citizens are relating with politics, debating the present and the future of politics, and therefore of democracy, is crucial – we agree with Rancière (1999) about the interchangeability between politics and democracy. Arundhati Roy introduces vital questions that point to some of the problems in democracies that clearly are not going unnoticed by citizens:

> "What happens once democracy has been used up? When it has been hollowed out and emptied of meaning? What happens when each of its institutions has metastasized into something dangerous? What happens now that democracy and the free market have fused into a single predatory organism with a thin, constricted imagination that revolves almost entirely around the idea of maximizing profit? Is it possible to reverse this process?" (Roy, 2009, p. 2).

Democracy, albeit a successful political ideal, is currently running into trouble as the flaws in the system become increasingly visible, causing widespread disenchantment with politics. Over the past decade, political theorists and philosophers alike have attempted to analyse the way democracy and politics are being integrated into a state of affairs in which there is a primacy of the economy and the individual – as made visible in the previous sections. Rancière (2004), Žižek (1999) and Mouffe (2005) are some of the main authors that engage in vigorous debates about the consequences of a post-political context characterized by a foreclosure of the political dimension and, therefore, by the need for a transformation of the notion of the political. The intensification of neoliberal economic policies, turning markets into predators of the social life,

embarrasses the authority and the power of the nation-States. Thus, citizens recognize the "inability of democratic politics to produce viable solutions to social and economic problems" (Dean, 2011). This post-political condition brings about the denial of "the inherently conflictual nature of modern pluralism" (Mouffe, 2005, p. 105), promoting consensus and preventing the "metaphoric universalisation of particular demands" (Žižek, 1999, p. 204). Therefore, in the current political and economic situation, antagonism is disavowed, and the political claims of particular groups are deflated in their potential universal nature, leaving no room for the confrontation of the system in which lies the very nature of politization. Contradictions often exposed by political struggles, claims and contestations are mastered so as to become unnoticed because they often collide with hegemonic interests; therefore, they are recurrently transformed into the widely conveyed lack-of-alternatives discourses (Stavrakakis, 2007; Katsambekis, 2011). In this way, consensus reduces political processes to procedures carried out by a set of specialists and technocrats (Rancière, 1999, 2004; Žižek, 1999).

This post-political condition is close to the notion of 'post-democracy' that became particularly popular through Colin Crouch's book 'Post-democracy' (2004), although the term had already been used before, namely by Rancière in 'Disagreement' (1999). The latter states that "post-democracy is the government practice and conceptual legitimization of a democracy after the *demos*, a democracy that has eliminated the appearance, miscount, and dispute of the people, and is thereby reducible to the sole interplay of state mechanisms and combinations of social energies and interests" (p. 101-102). In the same vein, Crouch (2004) sees post-democracy as a kind of hollow democracy in the sense that, despite retaining its formal features (e.g., constituted by institutions supposedly aligned with popular will through electoral processes, respect of freedom of speech, etc.), politics and government are in fact largely controlled by small privileged groups representing nothing but economic interests. Thus, political debate turns into a "tightly controlled spectacle" (ibid., p. 4), restricted to a set of experts and, consequently, citizens are reduced to a passive role (Stavrakakis, 2007). Democracy, then, evolves into something highly questionable. In Rancière's (1999) terms, the power of the people is inconvenient for the smooth functioning of the neoliberal and capitalist system and, therefore, power is handed to technocrats. This, to be sure, is utterly detrimental to politics.

The current socio-political scenario, in Europe and beyond, frequently frames the debates about 'post-democracy' in the sense that national Governments are seriously constrained by supranational institutions ruled by financial interests and economic

pressures. As mentioned by Crouch (2004), it is not austerity *per se* that constitutes evidence that we are moving towards post-democracy, but rather the way the economic crisis has been dealt with. The Greek case is quite paradigmatic in this respect. The debt crisis was transformed into the main instrument of collective and subjective discipline, enabling the forceful creation of a constraining 'consensus' (Stavrakakis, 2007) regarding an austerity package, designed by international institutions and leading bankers, that pressured the democratically elected Government at the expense of citizens (Katsambekis, 2011). The path towards the fulfilment of a democracy 'to come' (Derrida, 1994) is countered by the financial crisis and the role of private groups of technocrats in controlling national policies – particularly in countries like Greece, Portugal, Spain and Ireland (Katsambekis, 2011). Political parties lose strength and citizens feel they are governed by invisible, ubiquitous and illegitimate market forces and big corporations. The disruption of democracies can be seen in the decline of the identification with the traditionally strong Right or Left fields and the inevitability of neoliberal policies (no matter what party voters choose) (Ibidem).

1.3.1. How does post-democracy frame participation?

Current political debate is largely asphyxiated by electoral game politics that is attentively manipulated by the business interests of small privileged elites (Crouch, 2004). People feel progressively estranged from the political class and official political discourses. Mass communication about political matters is now characterized by two features, neither of them concerned with the quality of political debate: conveying partial information, in a language and format that is often unclear and contradictory; and promoting negative political controversies that seek to scrutinize politicians' private and public integrity. Sophisticated techniques of public opinion manipulation, as well as bland political party programs and a weak party rivalry are some of the features of what Colin Crouch (2004) named the 'post-democratic' societies. The chief force behind this model is the pursuit of economic interests, making minority interests far more powerful than the people's claims and demands, which in their turn are strongly manipulated by the political elites. Restricted groups controlling political affairs, a characteristic of pre-democratic times, raises the concern about the "entropy of democracy" (Crouch, 2004, p. 12), bringing about consequences we are already familiar with: the Welfare State becomes residual, increasing the gap between the rich and the poor; the easy 'milling'

of people's real concerns by the governmental political agenda; low levels of tax-based redistribution; the prominence of a handful of business groups influencing political decisions. As already noted by Rancière (1999), Marx's thesis about governments being "business agents for international capital" (p. 113) may be proving right, as politics increasingly serves capital management.

This scenario leads to people's withdrawal from conventional political mechanisms of participation. They cease to take part in a process they do not recognize as reciprocal, responsive or fully democratic. We witness the (subtle?) creation of symbolic and real mechanisms distinguishing those who can from those who cannot participate in the public political discourse. Citizens have become increasingly aware of their scarce influence on the ways societies are governed, with elections emerging as a façade and an outdated, anachronistic democratic method in a globalized world where people can participate with a click on their computers. People lose hope and interest in politics as they feel that politicians only address them when they need votes, in a process of "marketization of electoral politics" (Pleyers, 2015, p. 1) – which, no matter what, will maintain the *status quo*, caring less about people's claims and more about "the very influential '1%' that now owns more wealth than the rest of humanity" (Ibidem). The situation spirals out of control when people, namely youngsters, decide not to vote (a decline widely confirmed in the 2014 European elections and, more recently, in the 2015 presidential election in the USA) and electoral results show the success of right nationalist parties in many countries. Actually, what young people seem to be doing is denouncing this hollow democracy, calling the governments' attention to its inefficacy in addressing their real needs, and sounding the alarms about the possibility that the EU may have been moving in the wrong direction (Pleyers, 2015; Willems et al. 2012). The claims for a real democracy have been expressed through very significant social movements in which youngsters took a leading role, and where the signs of post-democracy are clear (Pleyers, 2015). The *Indignados* and the *Occupy* movements denounced the rising inequalities, and other movements in Central and Eastern Europe fought against political corruption and made claims for a deeper democracy (Pleyers, 2015). From this emerged a globalized "'generation movement', as it mobilized young citizens belonging to a generation that has grown up in a neoliberal environment of income insecurity with diminished welfare state, where neither work nor public services can be taken for granted" (Pleyers, 2015, p. 2).

But how are these kinds of expressions absorbed in post-democracies? The 'Occupy Wall Street' (United States), the 'Indignados' (Spain), the 'Geração à Rasca'

and the ‘Que se Lixe a Troika’ (Portugal) are some of the social movements that, although having quickly acquired a huge dimension, nonetheless evaporated as fast as they had emerged. In this period, experiences to combine representative and direct democracy took place in occupied squares and neighbourhoods, in the search for creating spaces alternative to the capitalist, top-down and State-centred society based (Pleyers, 2010). Yet, Governments seem to be more or less immune to people’s reactions. However, they are still worried about voting rates. The crisis of representative democracy has stimulated the rise of new proposals linked to the field of institutional politics; while these proposals seek more congruence with the current social context, they have nevertheless achieved limited success. The Pirate Party, a label adopted by political parties in different countries (but first established in Sweden), meets today’s interests and expectations by prioritizing direct democracy, freedom of information, anti-corruption, free sharing of knowledge, and a number of related features.[17] It is based on transparent political processes, inviting its members to vote online and decide about the political positions that its elected activists should carry out. However, just like the 5 Stars party in Italy, the tensions between representative and direct democracy rendered such movements into disillusions. Notwithstanding, these experiences clearly indicate routes for exploring alternative systems and for a renewed practice of democracy and citizenship. A drift towards a different democracy has already begun, but where that drift will lead to and what kind of stability it will produce remains to be seen. In any case, politics and democracy are in the agenda and the path of political participation may be one of radical transformation.

Chantal Mouffe (2005), discussing this post-political orientation, points to the centrality of antagonism in democratic politics in order to tackle the inequalities of contemporary societies, as opposed to its neglect in post-political and post-democratic cultures. Mouffe (2005) talks about ‘radical democracy’ as a remedy for post-democratic societies in which ‘agonistic pluralism’ would be restored as a principle of real democracy, fuelled by passion as a crucial element of political struggle (Mouffe, 2000, 2005). Recognizing, of course, the importance of institutions and ethical-political values in grounding any democracy, Mouffe talks about ‘conflictual consensus’ as the symbolic framework that legitimises the adversarial nature of politics. Thus, she stresses that democracy must be a context where citizens actually have the possibility of choosing between real alternatives and, thus, to be involved in political confrontation,

[17] ‘Pirate Parties International’ website: https://pp-international.net

adding plurality and legitimization to politics (Ibidem). The absence of alternatives, a neoliberal discourse of post-democratic times, strangulates the possibility of choice: freedom becomes an illusion when current political alternatives resemble the "choice between Pepsi and Coke" (Mouffe, 2016[18]). Even the populist (left and right wing) parties tend to continuously shift toward the middle of the political spectrum to attract more voters (Ibid). The radical democracy model is, then, a claim for the possibility of confronting hegemonic projects, fulfilling political struggles by real plurality, and for the whole spectrum of political positions to be represented. In line with Crouch (2004), who mentioned that the peak of democracy occurred in the second half of the last century, when the welfare of employees was truly considered for the sake of the economy, and trade unions had a central role for centre-left parties, Mouffe highlights the problem of the under-representation of large groups of citizens, including young people and the working classes.

In sum, it is urgent to discuss participation in this context, in which the divide between two groups is growing deeper: the restricted group of politics and finance, which regulates the system and uses resources in predatory fashion; and a larger group, characterized by labour precariousness and ontological insecurity. In this post-democratic scenario, in which antagonism is neutralized and depoliticized, new forms of control by the instituted order arise, as we witness the trivialization of massive political demonstrations by political decision-makers – let's recall the magnitude of the 2011 and 2012 demonstrations in Portugal and Spain and the minor impact they had on policies. Ultimately, how does participation acquire sense for citizens, including the non-institutional forms of expression? And what are the effects of political participation in post-democratic societies?

In his book 'On the Shores of Politics', Rancière (2007 [1992]) points to the fact that the permanence of democracy resides pretty much in its mobility and, therefore, in its "capacity to shift the sites and forms of participation" (p. 60). Participation, then, is about a continuous and creative renewal, and despite the hegemony of a flawed system, citizens should continue to claim for more democracy and governments should hear them more carefully. We, as social scientists, must continue trying to better understand this whole phenomenon, starting by looking at the trends, patterns and practices of participation and learning what kinds of changes they produce and reveal. How are people participating? Through local community transformation processes? Through

[18] http://www.eurstrat.eu/chantal-mouffe-on-post-democracy-its-like-a-choice-between-pepsi-and-coke/

organizations or groups that try to put pressure on the Government? Are people intentionally not politicizing the communities they create? Are they creating daily democratic practices, insulated from the bigger system?

We agree about the need to bring people (the *demos*) back to democracy (Rancière, 2007 [1992]), which is crucial if we want a true representative system. The only way to re-establish popular sovereignty is to value not only the people's vote, but also people's voices in the political process. Following Mouffe, political parties must redefine themselves: antagonism should be incorporated in the Left-Right dynamic, instead of deleted by the current consensus at the centre of the no-alternatives discourse. This consensus has brought about people's opposition to such Establishment, and it is beginning to prove to be a breeding ground to extreme right-wing alternatives. Society as a whole needs to be more politicized. That begins with the creation of stronger synergies between different participatory contexts and the political sphere. A lot of barriers need to go down: political parties should not strive to be pure arenas, but rather be closer to social movements; the latter should not demonize institutional politics, but rather contribute to its humanization, rendering it a living ground for the common people; schools and other public spaces should not avoid talking about politics, as if it would contaminate supposedly ideologically-'neutral' contexts. After all, we still live in an (apparent?) representative democracy and governments still decide over our lives. Yet, the democratic deficit, a corollary of insufficient popular support, makes Governments illegitimate and democracy poorer, making room for the arbitrary exercise of power. Additionally, therefore, the enlargement of the political sphere through the expansion of participation should be described in-depth, as the better we understand the phenomenon, the more useful will our contributions be for the aforementioned synergies. Participation as "one of the main ways in which citizenship is built, increased and enlarged" (Moro, 2015, p. 500) brings about several social benefits, and also leads to the development of personal competences (Menezes et al., 2012a; Barrett & Zani, 2015). The next section will discuss how civic and political participation can be pedagogical and whether it can be transferred to other significant youth contexts, namely the school. Can we talk about a continuum between the personal value of participation and the competences needed at school? Besides being socially relevant, to what extent is participation personally important?

1.4. The pedagogy of 'the lived experience'

As stated beforehand, it is commonly accepted that citizens' participation is important to build and maintain healthy democracies. In principle, through participation people take a stand regarding decisions that affect their and others' lives, governments are more or less legitimised by popular support, politicians' actions are scrutinised, and the welfare state is strengthened. Additionally, participation is referred to as leading to personal benefits. Research indicates that participation is related to several positive variables, such as political literacy, self-efficacy, trust in government, political tolerance, communitarian involvement, moral identity, subjective sense of well-being and psychological empowerment (e.g., Hooghe, 2003; Larson et al., 2006; Morgan & Streb, 2001; Putnam, 2000; Schmidt, Shumow, & Kackar, 2007; Stewart & Weinstein, 1997; Sullivan & Transue, 1999; Duckitt & Farre, 1994; Youniss, 2009; Flanagan, 2004). However, the experience of participation is not inherently beneficial: it depends on the type of experience we talk about – it may bring about either positive or negative consequences, it may convey democratic or, instead, non-democratic values. Two main questions animate this section: What can one learn from participation? Can what is learned from participatory experiences be transferred to other life domains?

1.4.1. Participation as a pedagogical experience (or learning the very nature of democratic politics)

Democracy, more than just a form of government, is a practice on social and political life, maintaining or transforming it (Bernstein, 2000). Through social and political involvement, citizens have diverse experiences – of inclusion and exclusion, with opportunities (or lack thereof) for action, of plurality and consensus. Thus, depending on the existence of certain components, participation can be either an experience in democratic learning or, instead, it can promote anti-political dispositions. Coimbra (2012) straightforwardly makes this point, stressing that the "social risks, stereotyped views, conformist attitudes, distrust and skepticism sum up the less interesting results of political participation, when research dissociates it from the evaluation of the quality of such experiences" (p. 159). Other researchers have already brought to the table the

discussion about the importance of considering the nature and outcomes of participation. Fiorina (1999) made the claim that civic engagement in the political realm can be harmful given that the expansion of opportunities to participate in politics enables extremists to participate more, as they have higher expectations regarding changing the *status quo*. This problem cannot be solved through the restriction of popular participation – such an argument would be ridiculous, as Fiorina pointed out. Instead, the possibility of bringing out the bright side of participation would require raising participation levels, once 'a lot' more of it, rather than just 'some' more, could enable the dilution of extreme voices. In the same vein, Theiss-Morse and Hibbing (2005) discussed the democratic benefits of civic engagement by developing a systematic literature review regarding participation in civic groups. They claim that homogenous groups – the ones that people often join in – do not lead to political participation and do not promote democratic values. Yet, to be sure, by getting involved in civic and political practices, "citizens need to learn that democracy is messy, inefficient and conflict-ridden" (Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005, p. 227). Therefore, participation can mean several negative things: the exclusion of others who are different (Putnam, 2000), the protection of a certain status (Kohn, 2002) the cultivation of selfish interest (Rosenblum, 1998) and the avoidance of any kind of political talk in order to preserve consensus-based environment (Eliasoph, 1998).

One can argue that politics can also mean consensus and a conflict-free environment and, therefore, a group in which this is preserved should be considered a good form of participation as well. Indeed, such features, *per se*, do not render a given group anti-democratic. However, they may contribute to an insulated living of democratic politics and turn people away from it, as eventually they will come to realise that doing politics is necessarily difficult. As pointed out by Walker (2002, p. 187), "democratic institutions exist not to level out differences between citizens, but to find ways to bring competing needs to the table and make difficult decisions about the allocation of resources and the production of values." Acknowledging each other's differences, learning from them and constructing, together, a common-ground of conciliation is a slow and hard process that can produce frustrations. However, in this way, by practicing politics, one finds

> "the creative dialectic of opposites: for politics is a bold prudence, a diverse unity, an armed conciliation, a natural artifice, a creative compromise and a serious game on which free civilization depends; it is a reforming conserver, a sceptical believer, and a pluralistic moralist; it has a lively sobriety, a complex

> simplicity, an untidy elegance, a rough civility and an everlasting immediacy; it is conflict become discussion; and it sets us a human task on a human scale." (Crick, 1964, p. 161)

Politics, then, is diversity, opposition, confrontation and plurality. Learning, in its turn, entails a continuous organization and reorganization of experience through a process of reflection, in which the meaning of experience is amplified and the possibility of uncertainty is integrated (Dewey, 1916). Practicing and learning democracy may incorporate such features. Thus, some questions can now be raised: Does involvement in a political party instigate development? If so, is the development it promotes of a different kind from that which is promoted by an environmental organization? In what extent? What, then, is the specific role some settings play in promoting civic and political engagement and personal development? Ferreira, Azevedo and Menezes (2012) address these questions and argue that "some everyday life civic and political experiences might […] present the variety of developmental conditions, and interaction quality [which are] key to understand[ing] the transformational potential of experiences" (p. 601). The assumption at stake is that certain components can distinguish between pedagogical (developmental) and non-pedagogical contexts, accounting for the possibility that some participation experiences contribute to the reinforcement of stereotypes, distrust and social fragmentation (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Mahoney, 2000; Menezes, 2003; de Picolli et al., 2004; Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005).

The quality of participation experiences

The possibility that participation experiences can lead to negative outcomes for democratic life asks for further research focused on the nature of participation experiences, questioning what citizens learn from them and how they impact their political development. When it comes to participation, "more is not necessarily better" as stated by Menezes (2003), highlighting that youth involvement can be pedagogical, but only "if it is intentionally designed and systematically supported" (p. 430); that is, a personally meaningful involvement that includes interaction with difference, and offers opportunities for personal integration.

Analysing the participation experiences of 15 year-olds and upper secondary students from six of the European countries considered in the Civic Education Study –

conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) –, Menezes (2003) shows that, in some situations, there is a link between the frequency and length of involvement and the effects of participation on civic concepts, attitudes and political engagement. Students reporting a monthly, rather than weekly, involvement score higher in political interest, expected political participation and positive attitudes towards immigrants. Additionally, in some cases the absence of experiences (e.g., in attending meetings of organisations) is related to more positive attitudes towards immigrants, when compared to students that have a weekly involvement. The need to consider the quality of participation is thus highlighted. According to Ferreira, Azevedo and Menezes (2012), participation can entail – likewise strictly pedagogical contexts – such developmental elements, as some experiences in civic and political settings include continuity, personal significance, contact with plural perspectives, and conflict integration. Therefore,

> "the elements of challenge and support, of action and reflection may be an important part of experiences such as getting involved in political parties, unions, social movements, volunteer work in the community, religious or recreational associations [as] these may (at least for some of those involved) have the high quality social interaction features that seem to prompt development in both cognitive and attitudinal domains" (Ferreira et al., 2012, p. 601).

The concept of Quality of Participation rests "on classical contributions from developmental psychology, educational theory and political science to define criteria that could inform the quality of participation experiences" (Ferreira, Azevedo & Menezes, 2012, 1). The theoretical framework is based on classical theories of psychological and educational development that explored the relevance of real and meaningful action, namely that which enables role-taking experiences and reflection in supporting, yet challenging, relational contexts (Dewey, 1916; Mead, 1934; Piaget, 1977; Kohlberg, 1976; Sprinthall, 1991; Zimmerman, 1995). Additionally, Ferreira, Azevedo and Menezes' work integrates contributions from political philosophers such as Hannah Arendt (2001 [1958]), Michael Walzer (1995, 2002) and Noberto Bobbio (1995) regarding the relational and plural dimension of politics and the important role that emotions play in it. This is why Ferreira and colleagues stress the importance of participation experiences that people perceive as significant and engaging in terms of opportunities for interaction and pluralism. The works of John Dewey (1916), Georg

Herbert Mead (1934) and Jean Piaget (1941) were also inspirational, particularly regarding the importance of taking the role of the other and integrating the recognition of difference on self-development. The idea of reflective abstraction also echoes in other literature that stresses the opportunities for social interaction as a source of cognitive conflict (Lind 2000; Kohlberg & Wasserman 1980).

The concept of Quality of Participation is based on the recognition that civic and political participation experiences are not to be regarded as eminently or 'naturally' positive processes, but rather as experiences that, if they bring about developmental change, can be deemed pedagogical. By developmental quality of participation, we refer to experiences that take place in meaningful civic and political contexts, which favour interactions deemed transformative, that is, interactions that promote more complex modes of comprehension and action (Ferreira, Azevedo & Menezes, 2012). For a participation experience to be regarded as possessing developmental quality, the following components need to be present: interaction with different points of view (as the integration of diversity and pluralism promotes cognitive development); reflection about one's own perspective and participation in such a compelling and challenging environment; action in and reflection on real, meaningful issues (involving personal implication and commitment) (Ibidem.). The transformative potential of action and reflection depends, then, on their complementarity, as well as on the duration of the experience, given that development requires long-term continuity.

During the past decade, studies developed by members of this research group have corroborated the validity of such condiments in given participation experiences, showing their relationship with other important political dimensions. A cross-sectional model with adolescents showed that high quality experiences favour more complex levels of thinking about politics (Ferreira, 2006). Likewise, evidence from a longitudinal study revealed that high quality has a positive influence on youngsters' dispositions to become involved in the future, and suggests that no participation at all can be better than low quality participation (Azevedo, 2009). Also, regarding young people from both migrant and national origin, high-quality participation experiences produce a significant change on internal political efficacy for all groups, on collective efficacy for Portuguese-origin youngsters, and on dispositions to become involved in the future for groups of Portuguese and Brazilian origin (Fernandes-Jesus, 2013). Veiga (2008), looking at the type of organisations university students get involved in, found out that homogeneity – not favouring debate between different opinions – was associated with low levels of participation quality, which had a detrimental impact on

psychological empowerment. Indeed, looking at the experiences of participation and at the groups' features uncovers the limitations of considering nothing but quantity in what regards participation. Analysing discourses of leaders and participants in the Portuguese and Swedish sections of Amnesty International, Malafaia (2011) highlighted the differences in the discourses and practices most valued in both groups: one composed of a homogenous socioeconomic and ethnic elite, and the other one characterised by educational, economic and social heterogeneity. The first one (Swedish case), although displaying an impressive rise in the numbers of members, has a lower level of active participation in the decision-making processes of the Organisation and on the local-level groups. In its turn, in the Portuguese section, way less effective in recruiting members, participants have a long-term involvement in local actions and projects, contributing to their design and implementation, and are also more active in the assemblies. Contrary to the Swedish members, most of the Portuguese participants do not report participation in other groups, assuming the exclusive dedication to the Amnesty – which is congruent with the higher levels of civic and political participation of Swedish population.

In sum, in this thesis, talking about "quality of participation" means we are considering the following criteria: the *duration* of the experience; the involvement in significant activities entailing the implementation of *action projects*; the opportunity to *analyse and integrate* the meanings of the experience; the confrontation with *different points of view* in contexts in which plurality, difference and diversity are taken into account (Menezes, 2007, p. 61, emphasis in the original). Therefore, quality of participation presumes personally meaningful involvement, participating in diverse activities, searching for information and getting implicated in decision-making processes. In this way, participation may contribute to political and democratic learnings that can be useful in other spheres of life.

1.4.2. The relationship between participatory and academic settings

The theoretical model outlined above goes in line with Biesta and Lawy's (2006) argument about the importance of understanding the learning of democratic citizenship as a situated process. An 'individual-in-context' approach to citizenship education emphasizes the learning that occurs throughout the life settings, in which the relationship with public issues takes on different shapes (Ibidem). Therefore, as an educative process, participation refers to the ways citizens continuously make sense of

their role and place in the world, influenced by multiple experiences taking place in diverse life contexts. This is in line with socio-constructivists perspectives on learning that call our attention to the social and relational contexts where knowledge is situated (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1990). Research on young people's participation implies, then, the assumption that they "learn at least as much about democracy and citizenship from their participation in the range of different practices that make up their lives, as they learn from that which is officially prescribed and formally taught" (Biesta & Lawy, 2006, p. 73). Participation, then, can be highly pedagogical, inclusively bringing about competences that are useful in other domains. Considering participation in its pedagogical potential includes linking contexts and inquiring about the transferability of the learnings associated with it. There is a whole variety of settings and agents that contributes strongly to learning democratic citizenship (e.g., family, school, peers, media). Specifically, in what concerns the role of school, a varied body of research has reported its classical relationship with participation: first, formal education promotes knowledge and dispositions required for participation (e.g., Niemi & Junn, 1998; Putnam, 2000); second, democratic school environments fostering an internal participatory culture increase the likelihood of youngsters being politically engaged (e.g., Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Campbell, 2008). However, there is also the need to ask about what happens the other way around: are civic and political practices producing outcomes valued by the educational institutions?

Schools are fundamental in preparing students for real life, not only by transmitting the prescribed learning contents, but also through promoting other kinds of learning activities oriented to citizenship development. Actually, by opening up the learning scope to the promotion of civic activities, educational institutions add an asset to their mission. In other words, not only what is learned in these institutions impacts, quantitative and qualitatively, on civic and political participation, but also this sort of experiences may contribute greatly to academic success. Research shows that when the school's internal culture and curricula stimulate collaborative work and contact with different points of view, promoting students' autonomy and engaging them in internal dynamics, the students' academic performance improves (Ahlström, 2010; Hofman, Hofman & Guldemond, 2002). Participation in extra-curricular activities is often positively correlated with good school grades and academic expectations, fostering students' motivation to progress in the educational system (Khan, Jamil & Khan, 2012). Being involved in sport groups, for example, usually stimulates mental awareness, facilitates concentration in study (Hills, 1998), increases learning motivation and

promotes cognitive development (Khan, Jamil & Khan, 2012; Taras, 2005). Educators also report the benefits associated to engagement in co-curricular activities for students' academic performance, as it is considered that such experiences instigate communitarian spirit, learning motivation, and academic self-efficacy (Kariyana, Maphosa & Mapuranga, 2012), all of which are utterly important in preventing school dropout (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Co-curricular activities are, then, quite beneficial in promoting academic results (Adeyemo, 2010; Marsh & Kleitman 2002). Chang (2009) showed that involvement in volunteering and community service by young people in high-school has a positive impact on their academic results in higher education. Similarly, Mezuk and colleagues (2011) investigate the role of Urban Debate Leagues in which students from basic and secondary schools engage. They show that such political debates stimulate critical thinking, personal development and academic competences, suggesting additionally their potential in blurring socioeconomic inequalities related with the students' background (Mezuk et al., 2011). Thus, it is important to account for the direction and magnitude of the relationships between socioeconomic dimensions, academic performance and participation, in order to understand whether we face causal relationships or selection effects that reproduce into other spheres, given that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds may present little probabilities of participating in co-curricular activities, while also exhibiting low academic involvement and success (Chang, 2009).

Raising the bar: From quality participation to higher cognitive learning in school

There is evidence that civic and political experiences during school years not only have a positive impact on students' academic performance, but also predict their future participation (Youniss et al., 1997), including electoral behaviour (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). In times such as these, when young people disavow institutional politics and simultaneously display signs of estrangement from educational institutions – the levels of school dropout and NEETs are high in most European countries – a better understanding of how experiences in different contexts can feed each other contributes to gaining an ample vision of the learning process and to address the fragilities of both the participatory and the academic field. While there is evidence that civic involvement is related to the academic and cognitive development of young people (Kuh, 1995; Terenzini, et al., 1995), most studies focus on civic and

political experiences related to the school. Furthermore, there is a gap in what concerns the articulation between the cognitive processes at play in participation and in the schooling experience. How does the learning acquired in civic and political activities (e.g., volunteering in an NGO, taking part in a political party, making lifestyle choices for political reasons) impacts the way youngsters play their role as students? Besides the objective measures of participation and academic success (levels of membership and school grades, respectively), the subjective experience should be considered. As previously elaborated, when accounting for the relevance of the developmental quality of participation, meaningful and long-lasting effects of certain experiences matter in what concerns individual development. Likewise, more participation does not necessarily mean that democratic learning is occurring. Similarly, getting good grades at school does not reveal *per se* a meaningful learning experience capable of simulating critical and complex ways of thinking. In other words, both experiences may be merely instrumental and, from a developmental perspective, unsuccessful. The way Dewey (1916) expressed his vision of the teachers' role is quite enlightening in this regard: "Were all instructors to realize that the quality of mental process, not the production of correct answers, is the measure of educative growth something hardly less than a revolution in teaching would be worked." (p. 207).

Quality of participation can be assessed through inquiring how individuals perceive the experience in terms of opportunities to actively carry out diverse activities, contact with different points of view, reflect and personally integrate what is lived and learned. Thus, in the same way, academic experience can also be better understood when students report how they relate with the school environment and in what extent they feel the ability to self-regulate their own learning and transform it into a meaningful process. Indeed, researchers have emphasised the importance of promoting challenging learning contexts, and offering conditions for students to be critical and autonomous (ten Dam & Volman, 2004). The more students perceive their learning experience in a static and instrumental fashion, the more distant they will become from the school system. Metacognition entails the recognition of learning as a process in which the individual creates and continuously transforms his/her experience of the learning process itself: the ability to plan, understand and evaluate what is being learned (Flavell, 1979, 1987). This concept points to a holistic vision of learning and to the recognition that school success does not depend only on the strategies used during the learning process, but also on the knowledge about when and how to use them (Pressley, 1986). Knowledge about the cognitive processes and the ability to self-regulate it are

metacognitive competences highlighted in the educational field given that they entail the students' knowledge about their own cognitive processes and the ability to transform the cognitive activity, in order to achieve success in a certain academic task (Ribeiro, 2003). One of the classical effects of metacognition is related to the motivation to learn – and continuously training the competence of learning to learn –, as the control and management of cognitive processes promote the sense of responsibility and the subsequent good results generate self-confidence (Morais & Valente, 1991). Therefore, other concepts, such as motivation and self-efficacy, are often articulated with metacognitive learning. The motivation-cognition dynamic is traditionally perceived as crucial in understanding academic performance and lifelong learning (e.g., Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Pintrich & García, 1991). Likewise, academic self-efficacy is regarded as an added value in making sense of the learning experience, as it relates to students' beliefs and expectations about their own skills to achieve their academic goals, influencing the strategies and plans they stablish (Pina Neves & Faria, 2006).

Metacognitive skills and self-regulated learning, strong driving-forces of academic success (e.g., Magno & Lajom, 2008; Brown, 1987; Ribeiro, 2003), correspond to a learning perspective that seems to go hand-in-hand with the developmental approach to civic and political participation. The emphasis placed on considering plural perspectives and having opportunities to act and reflect (Ferreira et al., 2012) seems to land in the same page as the assumption that students can only learn from their experience though metacognitive reflection (Colby et al., 2007), which involves, for example, knowing how to use certain resources and when to seek help from others (Fouche, 2013). These are features that distinguish 'good' participation (Ferreira et al., 2012) and 'good' students (Flavell & Wellman, 1977). Dewey, throughout his classical work 'Democracy and Education' (1916), pointed to the fact that, without reflecting on experience, no learning results from it. It is reflection that enables the continuous reorganisation, reconstruction and transformation of the experience itself – it is in this process that the very nature of education lies. This is true whether we talk about participation in a social movement or attendance to school classes. The fact that participation experiences may favour social interaction, cognitive conflict, and a critical understanding of reality through confrontation with plural interpretations raises the hypothesis that such experiences stimulate more complex and successful ways of being a student. The existing studies open up possibilities in this regard. The fact that involvement in sports groups stimulates learning (Tremblay et al., 2000), and increases the likelihood of raising constructive questions in the classroom, as

well as choosing challenging academic pathways (Chang, 2009; Kuh, 1995), supports the hypothesis that metacognitive competences may, indeed, be promoted by quality participation experiences. Veiga (2008) developed a study with 700 university students, concluding that their quality participation in civic and political contexts (from students' associations to volunteering organisations and political parties) fostered psychological empowerment and a more committed and complex cognitive-vocational development, which in turn were related to motivation and academic success (Astin, 1993). Lamm (2009) claims that self-regulated learning can play an important role in civic engagement, stressing the need to "teach students to reflect on what they are learning, and to link this learning to political engagement" (p. 95). Therefore, this under-researched link has to do with the relationship between the developmental benefits of participation and more sophisticated modes of learning in the school. Alberto Dávila and Marie T. Mora (2007) call attention to the lack of studies exploring the ways civic engagement impacts educational attainment, and to the importance of obtaining a fuller understanding of this relationship.

On the one hand, the links we have been drawing in this section reinforce the need to keep looking at the *quality* of both participation and (formal) learning processes and, simultaneously, shed new light on the personal and social benefits of youth civic and political participation. Further scientific knowledge in this domain may contribute to a better, more integrated vision of learning. Once we understand that "education is life itself" (Dewey, 1916, p. 239), we can start connecting contexts, learnings and experiences that converge to citizenship. Tackling a diverse and complex phenomenon such as participation (specifically youth participation), entails zooming in and out several times. In other words, it involves mapping behaviours and trends, investigating how it impacts people's lives and, meanwhile, questioning why it is an important issue in the first place. Understanding people's democratic experiences requires access to how they stand and what options they take regarding public issues. This is crucial in the research about civic and political participation. At the same time, describing whether and in what extent social practices – about which different kinds of rhetoric are created – are socially and personally useful is our responsibility as researchers.

1.5. Research questions and how to answer them – Introductory notes on method

Portugal, a fairly recent Southern European democracy, is currently facing important social, political and economic challenges. As already discussed in this chapter, the economic recession, the instability in educational and employment pathways, the disbelief in institutional politics, together with the conveyance of 'lack-of-alternative' narratives that go along a consensus-at-the-centre political agenda, strongly constrains what democracy is and, consequently, the conditions for citizens' agency. At the same time, throughout the chapter it was emphasised that participation (towards social change) needs to be considered in its multiple expressions, but also questioned regarding its importance and impacts in/for individuals' lives. All these elements are part and parcel of this research focused on a persistent 'burning issue' in contemporaneity: youth participation. In the past decade, political and academic institutions have been trying to report the variations in this phenomenon, and also to provide reliable information about the factors that can either promote or hinder it, so that ultimately recommendations can be drawn. Like most social research topics, this demands considering the socio-political context that frames the investigation itself: the political decisions taken by governments, the popular reactions to them, and the existing political narratives. The social, political and economic context is pretty much inevitable in trying to make sense of how young people think and live politics, while understanding why participation – in its myriad forms – is important in the first place (to whom and why). From 2011 to 2013, a cycle of collective protests took place in several Portuguese cities against the Government's political choices and the austerity imposed by the Troika. The imminence of the Government's resignation and an early election followed this scenario of economic recession, increasing unemployment rates and severe restrictions to social support. It was in the middle of such a political crisis that this PhD research began.

1.5.1. Our research goals and questions

The research design was based, first and foremost, on a previous identification of some gaps in the existing research. In this respect, we meant to address i) the lack of studies analysing the relationship between (quality) participation experiences (outside school) and school learning; ii) the predominance of quantitative studies in investigating the quality of participation; iii) the scarce consideration of schools' types in studying youth civic and political experiences; iv) the fragile body of national research offering in-depth reports on the collective forms of civic and political engagement. Keeping these shortcomings in mind, we developed a research project aiming to connect the individually-reported trends, the political discussion in peer groups, and the internal dynamics of participatory contexts.

Therefore, the main *Research Questions* guiding this PhD research are:

I) What are the most frequent forms, and most meaningful contexts, of civic and political participation among young people?

II) How does quality of participation relate to academic experience?

III) What are the effects of socioeconomic variables on youth civic and political experiences?

IV) What and how do youngsters talk about current political events emerging from a particular socio-political environment (of contestation and protest)?

V) In what ways do young people collectively talk about political and civic issues, and in what terms do they make sense of participatory trends?

VI) What happens inside participatory contexts that youngsters identify as personally most meaningful and particularly promising in their developmental quality?

Research Question I

The goal here is to account for youth participatory trends and patterns through the identification of the contexts and forms of participation that youngsters from different socioeconomic background engage in. On the one hand, we seek to assess the most frequent modes of civic and political expression, whether they are conventional (linked to institutional and electoral politics) or non-conventional (e.g., volunteering practices, protest activities, political consumerism); on the other hand, we intend to

know which are the political and civic settings in which youngsters practice and learn democratic citizenship within plural, supportive, yet challenging environments (that is, the contexts favouring quality of participation experiences).

Research Question II

The aim is to analyse how the components that underlie participation experiences with developmental quality influence academic experience and performance, namely in what concerns competences of self-regulated learning. Thus, we articulate two different research fields (quality of participation and metacognition) that, in different ways and while focusing on different objects (civic and political participation and school learning), seek to understand meaningful learning processes, combining action and reflection about the experience. The extent in which civic and political experiences impact more complex forms of cognition and more meaningful school experiences is central in favouring the linkage between youth life contexts.

Research Question III

The purpose is to better understand the effects of socioeconomic variables on the civic and political experiences of young people. We will analyse the family cultural and economic resources as well as the type of school (public/private) youngsters study in, considering their role in determining the youngsters' objective and subjective advantage/disadvantage in what concerns political opportunities and resources to engage in the public sphere. We believe that inequality issues, and their reproduction through diverse spheres, must be taken into account when discussing political inclusion, democratic agency and school performance.

Research Question IV

The intention is to explore how the socio-political scenario is interpreted by the youngsters. The massive demonstrations that took place in cities like Porto were motivated by harsh political decisions and framed by an environment of contestation and calls for activism, in which youth groups played major roles. Thus, it became important to collect youngsters' comments about the demonstrations against austerity, as they could reveal their interest in and knowledge about political issues and their level of involvement in a social, economic and political scenario that potentially concerns them directly.

Research Question V

The point is to explore how young people characterise their relationship with political matters and to identify their suggestions on the improvement of such relationship. Specifically, we want to know their perspectives about current youth participatory trends – including different forms of participation, opportunities and resources to get involved, and the personal and social benefits associated. Furthermore, we intend to hear how they collectively construct the meaning of participation through their own experiences, the impacts it has/had in their lives (if any), and their interest in and attention to issues of public concern.

Research Question VI

The goal is to describe and analyse the internal dynamics of youth participatory contexts in order to understand what features make them particularly relevant for youths today, the learning processes collectively occurring inside them, and in what ways such settings promote distinctive participation experiences, with more developmental quality. Specifically, we want to know how participants make sense of their practices and roles within civic and political contexts, how those experiences impact youngsters (possibly beyond the time and space of those contexts) and how they intentionally project and perceive better social futures from collective ways of doing politics. Considering the different nature of participatory settings – one more civic (towards the community) and the other more politicized (institutional) – it is worth asking how they organise to achieve their purposes, and if different shared meanings of quality of participation are produced.

1.5.2. Methodological design

Researchers have been emphasising the need to adopt more flexible methodological approaches in the field of civic and political participation, in order to articulate statistically solid relationships that account for attitudinal and behavioural trends with political perceptions and subjectivities (e.g., Griffin, 2005). It is argued that research methods need to adapt to the nature of the object under study. Youth participation in contemporary societies, being strongly defined by its unconventionality and dynamism, requires a more comprehensive and heuristic research agenda in order to provide adequate answers. In other words,

> We need to renovate our research methods to make them more sensitive to new trends in political participation (…) [a possible] route is to widen the scope of research methods used to study youth participation patterns, which up to now seem to be dominated by quantitative designs. There should be more case studies of youth participation projects, in- depth interviews and group discussions, as well as representative surveys and multi-country comparative studies. (Kovacheva, 2005, p. 27-28)

We agree that "no single approach to research is best overall; rather, what is important is that the methods be appropriate for the questions under investigation […] all methods have their relative advantages and disadvantages" (Barker, Pistrang, & Elliott, 2002, p. 245). Methods, then, should be guided by the nature of the research object and by the aims of the research: what we want to know leads to how we will proceed to know it. Schwandt (2000) states that "it is highly questionable whether such a distinction [between qualitative and quantitative inquiries] is any longer meaningful for helping us understand the purpose and means of human inquiry" (p. 210). Mixed methods research has been considered the third methodological or research approach (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007), as while recognising the importance of both quantitative and qualitative approach, it has the potential to offer more complete and balanced results.

The mixed methods approach is often associated to Deweyian pragmatism, based on the assumption that research, as a form of inquiry (and, thus, a form of experience) is an embodied process of reasoning (Morgan, 2014). In this vein, the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying quantitative and qualitative paradigms may, ultimately, be conciliated and regarded as two sides of the same coin. Thus, the dualism between realism and idealism becomes obsolete and, consequently, there is no contradiction in considering that reality is socially constructed by experience, while in turn necessarily constrained by the existence of an objective reality. Despite the arguments stressing that the quantitative and qualitative paradigms are incommensurate (e.g., Sale, Lohfeld & Brazil, 2002), the practicality of pragmatism (more than its philosophical basis) has been fitting the stances of mixed-methods researchers about getting research done without being excessively preoccupied with abstract philosophical systems (Morgan, 2014). Putting it simple, pragmatism as a new paradigm for social research is based on a practical understanding of research as social action, in which the dynamism of the inquiry process combines the strengths of different methodological

approaches in service of the questions to be answered. Consequently, pursuing epistemological purity or engaging in quantitative-qualitative debates is outdated and, eventually, pointless (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Casebeer & Verhoef, 1997). The potential of this 'mixed methods way of thinking' (Greene, 2007) as a 'distinctive methodology' (Greene, 2008) is precisely the refusal to settle in and be framed by a single way of thinking and doing research. Rather, it stimulates an active dialogue between diverse ways of making sense of the world and embraces multiple techniques and scientific viewpoints: they are all legitimate – depending on the inquiry's context and on the specific research – and getting closer to a more complex representation of reality may be easier by mixing methods, because flaws and biases can be offset (Greene, 2007, 2008). Different ways of grasping social phenomena may generate better and more inclusive knowledge and "opportunities to meaningfully engage with the differences that matter in today's troubled world, seeking not so much convergence and consensus as opportunities for respectful listening and understanding" (Greene, 2008, p. 20). The role of socio-political realities in influencing research and, in their turn, the ways in which the study engages with the political context are at the forefront of the agenda in mixed-methods research (Greene, 2008; Morgan, 2014).

In our case, the mix of different methods will enable understanding the main participatory trends, their quality and impacts, and the contextual dynamics of participation – in order to integrate and complexify the results throughout different research stages. In fact, this research design fits the broad purposes of the mixed methods approach, in the extent that it seeks complementarity, development and expansion in understanding youth participation (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). The results from different methods will enhance and clarify the results of the others, and will also inform the decisions made along the way. The research goals listed above will be approached at three levels: *individual*, *group* and *contextual*. Seeking to build on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data and analysis, potentiating "a complex" picture of social phenomenon (Green & Caracelli, 1997, p. 7), we consider that mixed methods research is the most adequate procedure to grasp our research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). A survey was used to consider the individual level of analysis; focus groups discussions were organised in order to collect the perspectives of young people that could not be grasped through the survey, and simultaneously as a bridge-method to move to the contextual level, which was fulfilled through ethnographic work. An explanatory sequential design was developed (Creswell, 2012) to potentiate a gradually amplified vision of the phenomenon. Thus, the goal was

to promote a fruitful dialogue between levels of analysis, epistemological fields and methodological tools, in a way that each step would inform the next. By developing a methodological and analytical approach that is not very common in the field of youth civic and political participation, we expect to contribute to a more complete understanding of it. Our research in on youngsters aged between 14 and 30 years old, since this is an age-range indicated as an important period in terms of civic and political participation (Barrett & Zani, 2015), as it is related to political development throughout adolescence (Finlay, Flanagan & Wray-Lake, 2011) and to the increase of political opportunities with the coming of the voting age (Hadjar & Beck, 2010). The research is defined mainly by three phases:

First phase:

In the aftermath of the aforementioned wave of protests in 2012, we administered questionnaires to 1107 young students (8^{th} grade, 11^{th} grade and 2^{nd} year of University) from public and private schools, located in urban and semi-urban areas, in order to explore in what forms youngsters participate, in what terms they refer to the socio-political environment, and how their participatory patterns and (quality) experiences relate with socioeconomic resources and impact their schooling.

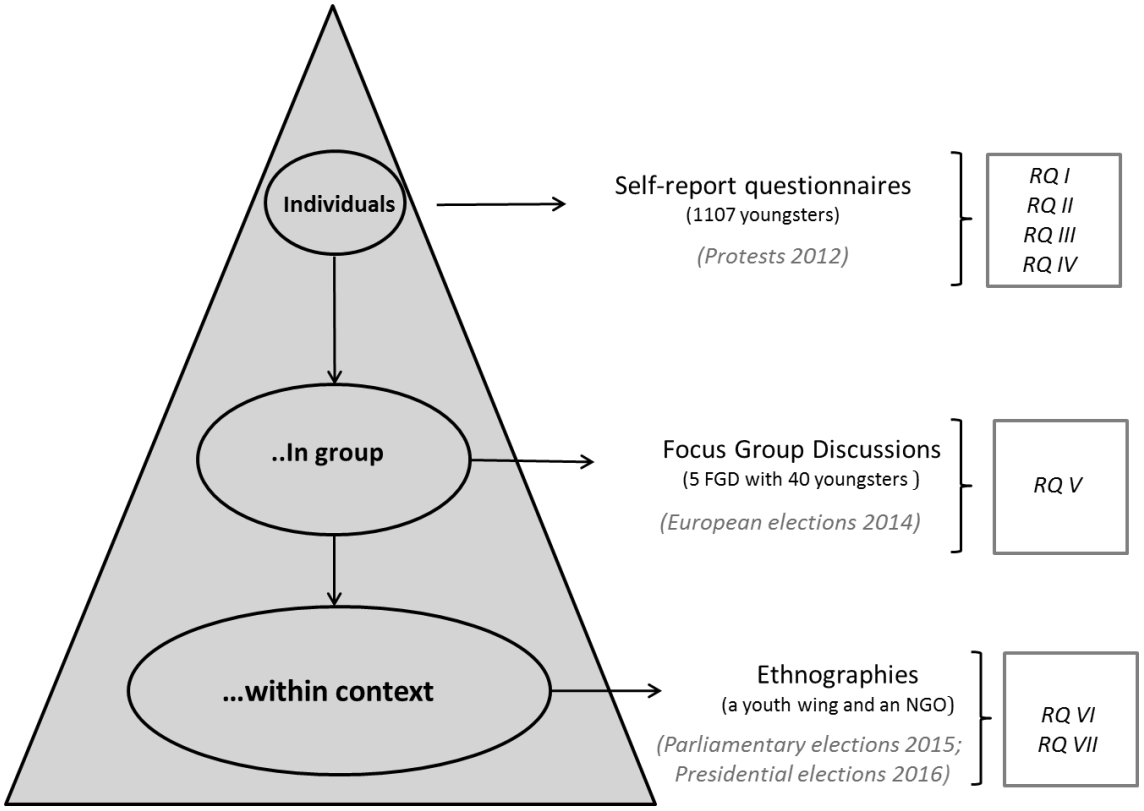
Second phase:

Right after the European elections (January, 2014), characterised, among other things, by low youth voter turnout and an impressive rise of the right-wing, we organised five focus group discussions with 40 young people in alternative educational pathways (professional/vocational schools and community projects), in order to listen to what they had to say regarding youth civic and political participation, namely their contexts, experiences, opportunities and impacts. They also had the opportunity to discuss the results from the quantitative phase.

Third phase:

Finally, in a period immediately before and after the Portuguese parliamentary elections (October, 2015), resting on the results of both previous research stages, we carried out ethnographies in the youth wing of a political party and in a non-governmental organisation (six-months duration in each), in order to see how politics is lived inside those settings. These participatory contexts were identified by the participants of the questionnaires as potentially promoting high quality participation.

Figure 2: Research scheme (levels of analysis, methods, political frame and research questions)



Thus, different methodological approaches and specific socio-political scenarios frame this research. The contextual features and methodological details will be described in the next chapters, as we move the lens from individuals to groups and to contexts – as portrayed in figure 2. In this way, we believe that the respective data will be better situated and the reader can better appreciate the results presented in each chapter and, ultimately, the story we tell in this thesis.

CHAPTER 2.

Tackling diversity: individual stances that enable a broader understanding

2.1. Methodological and socio-political frame: quantitative methods and demonstrations

2.1.1. Socio-political context

In Portugal, since 2011 a period of intense austerity, resulting from the external bailout, brought about hard-hitting fiscal measures that followed one upon the other (e.g., cuts in salaries and welfare provisions, tax increases) – in a country that was already one of the most unequal in Europe (de Sousa et al., 2014; Accornero & Pinto, 2015). This scenario also framed the organisation, driven both by national and international political claims, of public demonstrations in Portugal, of unprecedented dimensions since the 1974 Revolution that instituted democracy in Portugal (Accornero & Pinto, 2015).

The immolation of a young Tunisian man in December 2010, protesting against police repression, can be seen as the symbolic beginning of a globally contagious wave of collective actions that started at the outset of 2011. The 'Arab Spring' showed that concrete change may result from collective mobilisation, with Tunisia and Egypt, where both dictators were overthrown, being inspirational examples to the rest of the word. The '*Geração à Rasca*' in Portugal, the '*Indignados*' in Spain, the 'Occupy Wall Street' in the United States, are some of the movements that became part of a global *cycle of protest* – a notion defined by Tarrow (1995) in relation to its intensification, its geographical diffusion, the rise of new forms of organisation, ideologies and symbols, and the widening of actions' repertoire. In different ways, the protests around the globe exposed a legitimacy crisis of political institutions and a generalized disagreement regarding the way the economic crisis was being managed (Soeiro, 2014). According to Žižek (2013), all those protests seemed to tackle both economic and political-ideological issues, focusing on topics related to corruption and political inefficiency, on anti-capitalist claims, and also demanded transformations in the democratic system. In Portugal, the beginning of this cycle began was marked by the March 12, 2011 demonstration that had a big impact on the media, and gathered 200.000-500.000 people (according to different sources). It was a march on behalf of '*Geração à Rasca*' (the 'Desperate Generation'), as a reference to a student mobilisation during the 90's ('*Geração Rasca'* – the 'Trashy Generation'), and inspired by a popular song whose lyrics portray the young generation's anxieties due to job insecurity and lack of future prospects. This became the largest protest in Portugal since the Carnation Revolution in

1974 (Baumgarten, 2013). In that month of 2011, the socialist prime-minister resigned and, in April, with the country on the edge of bankruptcy, the government's intention to ask the FMI and the European Financial Stability Facility for a financial bailout was announced. Parliamentary elections, in which abstention reached its highest value since 1974 (51.97%), took place in June. A right-wing Government coalition aligned with the *Troika*[19] and its politics of austerity emerged from those elections (de Sousa, Magalhães & Amaral, 2014). After this, a number of other mobilisations took place, such as the 'Global Day of Action' on October 15, 2011, against a political system dominated by the financial elites, as the 'Occupy' movement gained further visibility (Soeiro, 2014; Baumgarten, 2013). This protest occurred simultaneously in 82 countries, with Spain, Portugal and Italy being the European countries in which protests acquired greater dimension (Soeiro, 2014). On September 15, 2012, after one year of austerity under the *Troika*, a new call for protests spread through the social networks under the motto "*Que se Lixe a Troika! Queremos as nossas vidas*" (Fuck the Troika! We want our lives back!). As stated in the movement platform:

> "the robbery (…) came and with it the application of devastating political measures that imply the exponential rise of unemployment, precariousness, poverty, social inequalities, the selling of the vast amounts of State's assets, the compulsive cuts in social security, education, health, culture and public services, so that all the money can be channelled to pay and enrich those who speculate about our sovereign debts (…) the austerity that imposes upon us, which destroys our dignity and life, does not work and destroys democracy"[20].

This appeal resulted in demonstrations in more than 30 Portuguese cities, in which about one million of people participated. This mobilisation, then, likewise the *Geração à Rasca*, had a striking level of participation (Estanque, Costa & Soeiro, 2013). This event came as a reaction to the Government's announcement of decreasing employers' contributions to social security and increasing VAT. After that, other demonstrations took place, such as the protests organised on October 13 in 23 cities, in line with the 'Global Noise' against austerity that was taking place in the same day in other countries. Social networks played a crucial role in producing a global public discourse, enabling

[19] Troika is composed by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

[20] http://queselixeatroika15setembro.blogspot.pt/p/que-se-lixe-troika-queremos-as-nossas.html

its transfer from the internet to the real public space – what Castells (2012) called a 'hybrid public space'.

The demands for a more real democracy, the disaffection regarding institutional politics, the informality and horizontality of these forms of political association, are common features linking international dynamics of protest (Baumgarten, 2013; Soeiro, 2014; Estanque et al., 2013). During the Portuguese demonstrations in Portugal of 2011 and 2012, posters and banners with messages like 'We consider ourselves Greek', or slogans proclaiming 'Spain! Greece! Ireland! Portugal! Our struggle is international' were often exhibited. Not only slogans were imported, but also repertoires of action (e.g., the organisation of public assemblies, the occupation of public spaces) and new activist groups and networks which resulted from the exchange of ideas in the internet (Baumgarten, 2013). In addition, it should be highlighted that the independency of these events and organisations from unions and partisan affiliations was a new phenomenon in Portugal (Ibid.). The March 12 Movement, for instance, emphasising the rejection of traditional political structures, invoked the Portuguese literature Nobel prize-winner, José Saramago, to stress its aim 'to make every citizen a politician'. Thus, these protests showed that "the forms of organisation of interests in contemporary societies (political parties, unions, social movements and NGOs) capture only a small range of potentially active citizenship" (Santos, 2011, p. 106). According to data from the European Social Survey (ESS), the people who reported having participated in at least one demonstration increased significantly in countries like Spain, Ireland and Portugal between 2008 and 2012 (Accornero & Pinto, 2015). In the case of Portugal, signing petitions and attending demonstrations increased since 2010, reaching the European average for the first time in a decade (de Sousa et al., 2014).

Yet, the decline of living conditions continued hand-in-hand with new austerity measures. In July 2013, two key Portuguese ministers resigned (the Finance Minister and the Foreign Affairs Minister): the former because of increasing public opposition to austerity and the latter due to disagreeing with the new choice for Finance Minister. This led to the imminence of the Prime-minister's resignation, who nonetheless ended up declaring that he would not resign in order to avoid deepening the political crisis. The crisis, however, continued, and not only in Portugal. Yet, "a generation of young people across the Mediterranean and the world, fac[ing] with a highly disputable and uncertain future – or even with no future at all (…) act and trust it will make a difference" (Menezes & Makkawi, 2013).

2.1.2. Methodological considerations: procedures, sample, and measurements

Membership in political parties and voter turnout are low, and at the same time different forms of participation are getting the youngsters' attention. At the same time, research has been showing that political opportunities may be constrained by socioeconomic inequalities, and that not all participation experiences entail developmental qualities. Additionally, likewise democratic participation, which is better learned in real-life contexts, academic success also seems to be fostered by meaningful and autonomous learning experiences, which can in turn be stimulated by what youngsters learn in other spheres of their lives, including civic and political ones. Given all that, what are the forms and contexts currently emerging as particularly significant for Portuguese young people? What are their visions and stances regarding the socio-political scenario? To what extent does quality of participation impact the youngsters' lives? How are their political participation and knowledge influenced by socioeconomic variables? These are some of the broad questions driving the quantitative phase of this research.

The definition of our research questions (listed in section 1.5) and of the sample we wanted to reach were necessary to carry out a survey (Cohen et al., 2000). Our cross-sectional study was based on three main criteria: a) schooling years; b) diversity of the type of school; c) gender balance. Our sample is composed by students aged between 14 and 30 years old, from the 8th and 11th grades, and the 2nd year of University. Our initial intention was to include youngsters between 14 and 26 years old, in line with research that defines this age-range as important to capture changes in political development throughout adolescence, as well as possible participatory differences before and after the voting age (Menezes et al., 2012a; Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Barrett & Zani, 2015). However, contrary to what was expected, in the 2nd year of University, several students were above 26 years old. Therefore, and following other studies that ended up widening this age-range (e.g., Fernandes-Jesus, 2013; Cammaerts, et al., 2015), we decided to leave out only students above 30 years old, as otherwise the 2nd year sample would be excessively unbalanced. We chose the second year of each school cycle in order to avoid possible variations related to the adaptation process to the first and last years of a schooling cycle. Additionally, in order to capture diverse perspectives and experiences, different locations (urban and semi-urban) and types of institutions (private and public) were considered. The type of school is actually an important dimension in processes of civic and political involvement, though seldom given due consideration (Campbell, 2008; Macedo, 2000).

39 classes from 19 educational institutions located in four districts (Porto, Braga, Viseu and Coimbra) composed our sample. A total of 1107 Portuguese students (61.4% female) from Grades 8 (*n* = 349; 49.6% female), Grade 11 (*n* = 383*;* 57.7% female) and the 2nd year of University (*n* = 375; 76.3% female) participated in this research. Table 1 presents the sample composition in more detail, including students' distribution across different geographical locations and types of school.

Table 1: Sample composition (school year, gender, school's type and location)

School year / **School type & context**	**8th Grade** (3th cycle of basic education)		**11th Grade** secondary education)		**2nd year** (higher education)		**TOTAL**
	male	female	male	female	male	female	
Public (semi-urban)	41	38	40	48	25	72	264
Private (semi-urban)	48	31	45	47	20	64	255
Public (urban)	30	48	34	79	27	88	306
Private (urban)	57	56	43	47	17	62	282
Total	176	173	162	221	89	286	**1107**
	349		**383**		**375**		

Schools (public and private) and students were sampled based on convenience. The conjugation of all criteria (related to school year, type of schools and geographical location) proved difficult in some aspects. Specifically, the identification of independent private schools in semi-urban areas was difficult, once the majority of them tend to be Government-dependent[21]. After a previous contact with the schools, the questionnaires were administered by the researcher in the classrooms; this was preceded by a brief explanation of the research project. This stage took place between April and June 2013. Parental approval was obtained for all participants who required so (see Appendix 1). The average time needed for filling out the questionnaire was approximately 40 min. The IBM SPSS Statistics 22 software was used for data analysis.

[21] In section 2.5. more information will be provided regarding the Portuguese educational system, including the distinction between fully private and publicly-subsidized private schools – our sample includes only the former.

The instrument was a self-report questionnaire comprising a wide set of scales, mostly related with political and schooling dimensions (see Appendix 2). The respondents rated the items in a 5-point Likert-type scale.

- the **1st part** of the survey included items relative to demographic, academic and socioeconomic information: age, sex, type of school, school year; self-evaluation of school performance (1 = insufficient; 5 = excellent); sense of school belonging, with 6 items (e.g., *This school means a lot to me*"); number of books at home (less than 10, between 10 and 100, and more than 100 books); the expected level of school attainment (1 = Basic education; 2 = Secondary education; 3 = Vocational course; 4 = Bachelor; 4 = Master degree; 5 = PhD); parents' levels of education (ranging from 1 [never attended school] to 5 [attended or finished higher education]); the perception of financial problems at home (1 = never; 2 = sometimes; 3 = often); and the political, ideological position (1 = extreme left-wing and 7 = extreme right-wing).

- the **2nd part** of the survey included the following dimensions, with responses given in a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.

Table 2: Presentation of the dimensions included in the questionnaire

Dimensions	Sources	Examples of items	Number of items
political interest	IEA Cived, 2002; European Social Survey; Emler, 2011	*I am interested in politics*	3
political attentiveness	Emler, 2011; Zukin et al., 2006	*I follow what is happening in politics through newspapers and magazines*	3
civic and political participation in the last 12 months	Lyons, 2008	*I attended a public meeting or demonstration dealing with political or social issues*	8
Quality of participation experiences	Ferreira & Menezes (2001)	*How do you evaluate your level of involvement'*	12
Resources and opportunities to participate	Pattie, Seyd & Whiteley, 2003; Verba et al., 2003	*Which factors influence your involvement most (e.g., time, money, interest)*	7
Interpersonal trust	European Social Survey	*I feel most people are trustworthy*	1
Political efficacy (internal, external,	IEA Cived, 2002; Niemi, Craig & Mattei, 1991	*I know more about politics than most people my age;*	6

collective)		*People in Government are not concerned with people's opinions;* *If young people work together, they can influence the Government's decisions*	
Trust in the form of government	IEA Cived, 2002; Pachi & Lyons, 2009	*Despite the flaws that democracy may have, it is still the best government system for Portugal*	2
Political tolerance	Duckitt & Farre, 1994 Azevedo, 2009	*A democracy that represents the people is the one that ensures the right to organize pacific protests*	4
Academic self-efficacy	Smith, Walker, Fields, Brookins & Seay, 1999	*I think I will go as far as I like in school*	7
Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire [MSLQ] (Elaboration, Critical thinking; Effort regulation; Peer learning)	Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & McKeachie, 1991; Melo et al., 2006	*I try to connect ideas from each academic subject with ideas from other subjects;* *I treat the academic subjects' material as a starting point and then try to develop my own ideas about them;* *Even when the subjects' materials are dull and uninteresting, I manage to keep working until I finish;* *I try to work with other colleagues in order to finish my school work*	19
Political literacy	Torney-Purta et al., 1999	Test: *Interpret of a political party's pamphlet*	*4*
Citizenship conceptions	Torney-Purta, Lehman, Oswald, & Schulz (2001)	*A good citizen is the one that votes in every election.*	*11*

Finally, we also included an open-ended question in which the respondents had to comment two images portraying the recent anti-austerity demonstrations (see Appendix 2). The inclusion of this element was deemed unavoidable given the context in which this research was undertaken. The content of these comments was analysed, and the subsequent categories inserted and coded in the IBM SPSS Statistics 22 software. The majority of the scales used in the instrument – namely the ones related to the attitudes, behaviours and dispositions towards civic and political participation – had been already used and validated with a population similar to that of our study (Portuguese adolescents and young adults) in PIDOP (the European research project mentioned in the second section of the previous chapter), and revealed acceptable or high reliability

(Fernandes-Jesus, et al., 2012b). The exceptions to this were the dimensions related to political literacy, metacognitive learning, and academic self-efficacy. Regarding political literacy, we selected four items out of a set of other questions used in an international study on civic education (Torney-Purta et al., 1999), in which Portugal was one of the participating countries (Menezes, 2002). Two criteria guided the selection of these questions: they should be intelligible for all participants (including the younger ones) and diverse regarding the political themes addressed. Concerning metacognition, we used the Portuguese version of MSLQ (Melo, Mendes, Gonçalves, Pile & Carvalho, 2006), once the instrument was designed in a modular fashion, allowing the selection of the scales more useful to our study, most notably the ones related to cognitive and metacognitive self-regulation strategies. This Portuguese version of MSLQ had already been used with Portuguese students (Santos, 2008; Gonçalves, Fidalgo & Martins, 2011), and in all the cases there was the need to adapt the scales. We shortened some scales and eliminated the mention to specific academic subjects, maintaining a sufficient number of items in each sub-scale to ensure stability in the factorial analyses. The choice of MSLQ was based on the fact that other instruments, such as the "Learning and Study Strategies Inventory" (Weinstein & Palmer, 1990) and the "Metacognitive Awareness Inventory" (Schraw & Dennison, 1994), have not yet been consistently validated for the Portuguese population (Bártolo-Ribeiro, Almeida, Simões & Maroco, 2010). Finally, regarding academic self-efficacy, we translated the original items and adapted them to high-school and higher education students. We eliminated two items of the scale: the item "*I believe I can be anything I want to be*", once we considered it might not be clear and also because it is more related to internal self-efficacy; and also the item "*I expect to do well on my homework assignments*" because it might not be adequate for higher education students. We gained knowledge of other instruments, namely from Portuguese authors, such as the "Academic self-efficacy scale", validated with young people, developed by Sílvia Pina Neves and Luísa Faria (2006). However, the 'general academic self-efficacy' sub-scale (the one that would be more appropriate to our study) had low discriminant validity and also made academic self-efficacy dependent on school grades. Authors were contacted and asked for permission to use and/or clarifications on the scales.

After taking the decisions deemed statistically and conceptually sound, we reviewed the intelligibility of all items and produced a first version of the questionnaire. A test with youngsters with characteristics similar to those to be included in the sample was then conducted. We used the 'think aloud method' so we could get information to

improve the instrument. This method has been used often in psychology since the 1940's, and it consists in asking the participants to think aloud about the process while they perform a given task (van Someren, Barnard & Sandberg, 1994). This is particularly useful in this kind of research, before administering the final version of the instrument, because it enables identifying aspects we had not previously considered. Eleven youngsters (9 boys and 2 girls) participated in the 'think aloud' session. They were aged between 14 and 23 years old. All of them studied in public schools, and the majority of them came from a rural village. They offered comments on the items, namely about their relevance and clarity. Also, we sought an estimation of the time required to complete the questionnaire so that we could provide this information to the schools when we contacted them. Every comment and suggestion from participants was registered. The 'think aloud' session lasted for about one hour, and participants took about 30 minutes to fill in the questionnaire. The changes made were related to the standardisation of the scales, the increase in the space available for answering the open-ended question, and some other minor aspects of the items regarding the specificity of what was intended (e.g., in question 3.2. it was suggested to state directly that the respondent should take into account a group/organization indicated previously); the reduction of some ambiguousness (e.g., in question 4, in which we had previously presented the option to indicate if the influence of certain resources was either positive or negative, the revised version presents only one option, in order for it to be easier to know what is intended); the organisation of some items (the item related to interpersonal trust, previously presented in isolation, was placed together with the items on political efficacy).

Throughout the next sections of this chapter, more detailed information will be provided concerning the instrument, specifically on the scales used in the empirical studies (their psychometric properties and compositions), as well as on the statistical analyses performed. Not all scales were used, since decisions had to be made to provide answers to our main research questions. This chapter is mostly composed of articles (published and in press), complemented with additional analyses that hopefully offer density and enable a wider vision of the individuals' stances on civic and political participation. Section 2.2. is devoted to report the levels and patterns of participation: what are youngsters' experiences and in what contexts do they most frequently and meaningfully engage in (*RQ I*). In section 2.3. [Article 1] we analyse the predictive power of civic and political experiences, most notably the ones entailing quality participation, on the development of learning strategies that promote the academic

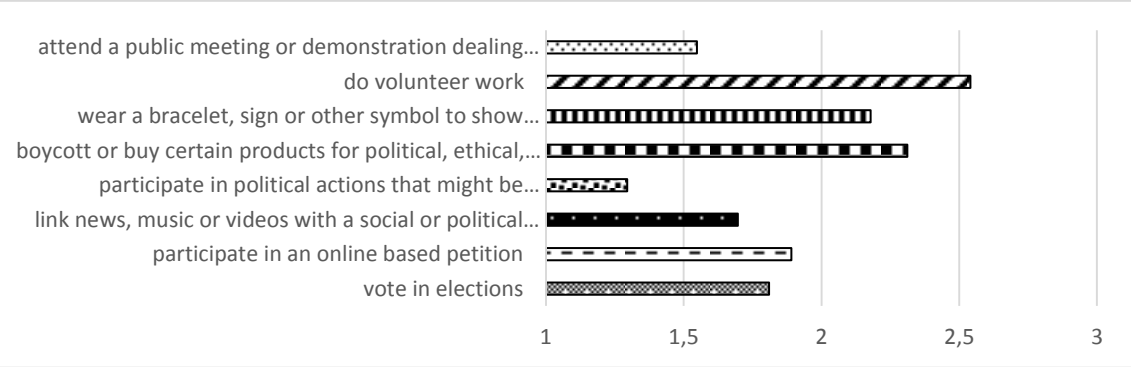
success: the pedagogical value of civic and political participation for the academic experience, namely the ability of learning self-regulation, will be explored (*RQ II*). In section 2.4. [Article 2] we seek to understand the relationship between socioeconomic variables (both individual and contextual) and the civic and political dimensions: the effects of economic and cultural capitals on youth civic participation experiences and political knowledge will be explored (*RQ III*). Finally, section 2.5 focuses on youngsters' visions of anti-austerity demonstrations in Portugal: the comments provided to the open-ended question are analysed here in terms of their content – what they say about demonstrations and their corresponding political scenario [Article 3] – but also in terms of their discursive complexity – how they talk about these events. In this way, we seek to provide a richer analytical framework of the political cognition of Portuguese young people (*RQ IV*). In some of these sections – 2.3. and 2.4. – we did not use the whole sample, but only the 8th and 11th grades, due to the very different patterns presented by the 2nd year of University students regarding political and educational development. This would have required us to consider the 2nd year separately from the others, which consequently would have defocused the articles and make them longer (something that would not be compatible with the word limits set by the journals). This is a gap in the thesis that resulted from the decisions that had to be made in order to get the articles published.

2.2. Experiences of civic and political participation: levels, patterns, trends

2.2.1. Levels of participation

Considering our sample of 1107 Portuguese students (see sample's detail description in section 2.1.), we now describe their levels of civic and political participation based on the Portuguese version of the Political Action Scale (Lyons, 2008; Menezes et al., 2012a). We used seven items (e.g., "*attend a public meeting or demonstration dealing with political or social issues*"; "*wear a bracelet, sign or other symbol to show support for a social or political cause*"; "*boycott or buy certain products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons*"; "*participate in political actions that might be considered illegal*"; "*link news, music or videos with a social or political content to my contacts*"). The youngsters rated the question "Have I done the following activities during the last 12 months?", ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very often). The reliability of the whole scale is $\alpha = 0.68$. In order to describe youngsters' levels of participation, we performed a descriptive analysis. Overall, the young students do not rate particularly high on participation; however, volunteering and political consumerism clearly stand out, followed by the use of political symbols (Figure 3).

Figure 3 – Levels of participation



Regarding each school year, 11th grade students are the ones who do more volunteer work, while the 'boycott (or buying) certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons' is mostly performed by 8th grade students. Online participation and taking part in demonstrations seem to increase with age, with University students scoring higher in these forms of participation, along with the vote which, being only applicable to young adults, remains a very relevant form of political participation. Volunteering is mostly carried out by young adolescents (11th grade).

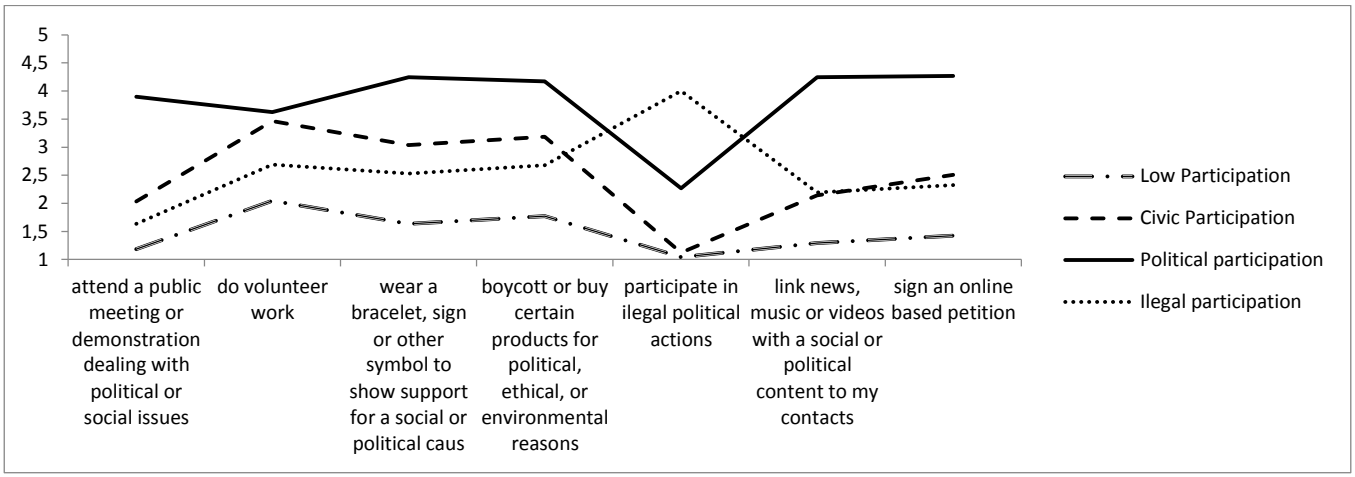
Figure 4 – Levels of participation, by school year

2.2.2. Patterns of participation

In order to explore how the sample is distributed regarding forms of participation, we performed a cluster analysis. The squared Euclidean distance was used as proximity measure in an agglomerative hierarchical clustering method. The number of clusters was determined by dendrogram, implementing the elbow criterion, and the development of the error sum of squares. Lastly, the K-means procedure was implemented for optimizing the cluster solution. The four adjusted clusters solution explains about 50% of variance. This examination of the participatory patterns shows a group that reports low levels of participation in all of its forms (*Low Participation* [N = 561]); a second group that does volunteering and engages in political consumerism, also wearing bracelets or other signs to show support to a cause, but presents low levels on more politicized forms of participation (we named this group *Civic Participation* [N = 332]); a third group that scores high on every participatory form, and seems to exhibit a more politicized participatory pattern (*Political Participation* [N = 71]); and, finally, a forth youth group, which reports the highest level of illegal participation (e.g., burning a flag, throwing stones, painting graffiti) (*Illegal Participation* [N = 116]) – Figure 5. Although the clusters' labels are of a different nature – the 'low participation' cluster being defined in quantitative terms, unlike the other ones – this is a way to make sense of the participatory patterns that emerged. This enables us to get a view on participation as a continuum of dynamic behaviours (e.g., Youniss et al., 2002; Teorell et al., 2007).

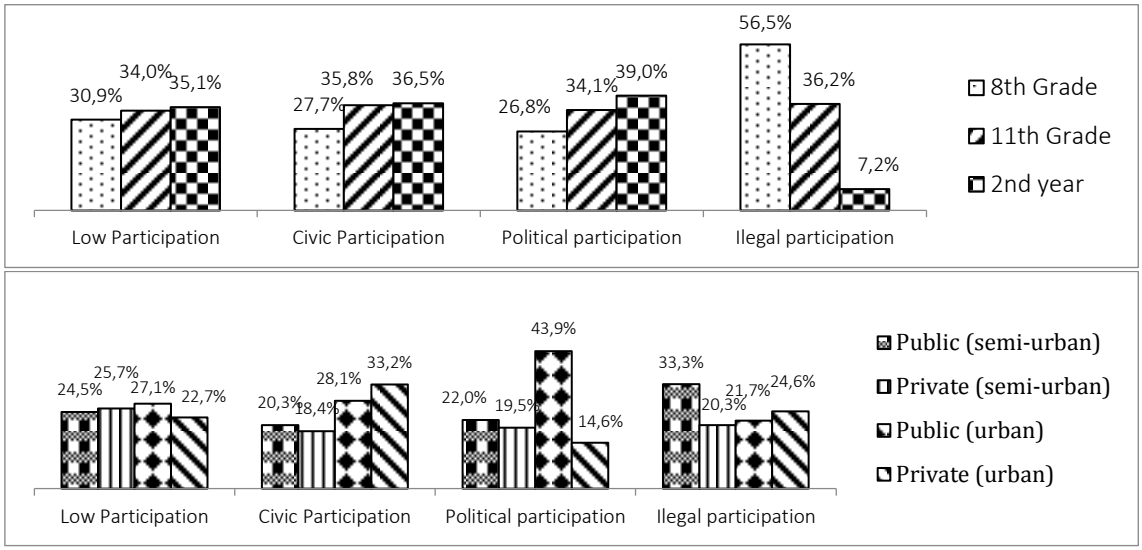
'Civic participation' seems to be a pattern that clearly prioritises volunteering activities and reveals political and environmental concerns related to consumerism, while getting away from directly politicized activities (e.g., protests) and rejecting illegal actions. 'Political participation', on the other hand, refers to a pattern in which multiple actions, in diverse arenas, are considered: the online, the protest and the expressive/lifestyle kinds of politics assume relevance. 'Illegal participation' is a particular group that, in general, presents low levels of participation but wears political symbols and, interestingly, gets involved in volunteering work, albeit in modest levels.

Figure 5 – Participatory patterns



Now, taking a look at who are the youngsters composing each cluster (Figure 6 and 7), we can see that 'civic participation' is mostly performed by older students (11th grade and 2nd year of University) from private schools. 'Political participation' is also more typical of the older groups, particularly university students, from public (urban) schools. Contrariwise, the cluster of 'illegal participation' is mostly constituted by younger students (8th grade) from public schools located far from urban centres.

Figure 6 and 7 – Clusters' composition by school year, school type and location



2.2.2. Quality of participation

The questionnaire of participation experiences (Ferreira & Menezes, 2001), whose theoretical construct was extensively elaborated in section 1.4, was designed to collect information about the developmental quality of the civic and political experiences of adolescents and adults. This instrument is composed of two subscales: opportunities for action [Cronbach's a = 0.77], with four items (e.g., "been directly involved in group decision-making"); and opportunities for reflection [Cronbach's a = 0.83] with four items (e.g., "observed conflicting opinions that brought up new ways of perceiving the issues in question";"). It uses a 5-point Likert- type scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very often). The confirmatory factor analysis performed for the whole sample shows a good reliability [X^2/df = 5,471; CFI = 0.981, GFI = 0.981; PGFI = 0.436; RMSEA = 0.064; P(rmsea <=0.05) = 0.039]. The level of Quality of Participation experiences results from a clustering procedure that combines the action and reflection dimensions, in which participants are classified into groups that articulate differently both dimensions (Ferreira et al., 2012). Multiple cluster analyses were employed by school year to classify participation experiences on the basis of similarity derived from the scores in QEP subscales. The squared Euclidean distance was used as proximity measure in an agglomerative hierarchical clustering method. Fusions were made by Ward's method. The number of clusters was determined by dendrogram, implementing the elbow criterion, and the development of the error sum of squares. Finally, the K-

means procedure was implemented for optimizing the cluster solution. K-means is a partition based clustering method to minimize the sum of squared error over all clusters. The three adjusted clusters solution explains about 70% of the variance. The final variable has three groups: Low quality of participation [N = 82 (8th grade); N = 89 (11th grade); N = 96 (2nd year)]; Medium quality of participation [N = 130 (8th grade); N = 148 (11th grade); N = 155 (2nd year)]; and High quality of participation [N = 119 (8th grade); N = 103 (11th grade); N = 71 (2nd year)]. The scores in the action and reflection dimensions show that, despite the fact that more 8th grade students belong to the 'high-quality participation' cluster, older adolescents and adults actually score higher on both action and reflection, and even their lowest scores (therefore corresponding to lower quality) tend to be higher than those of the youngest students.

Figure 8 – Action and Reflection, by school year

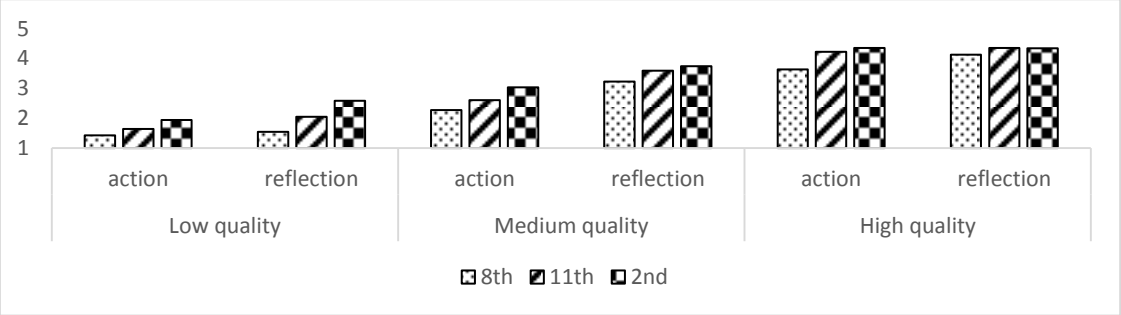
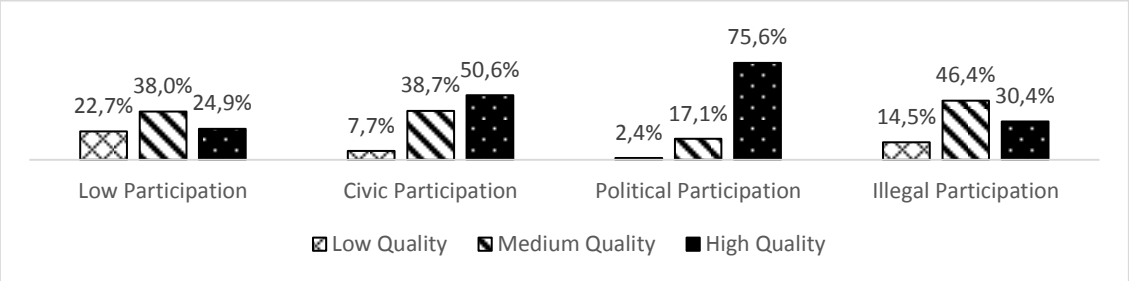


Figure 9 – Cross-tabulation Quality of participation * Patterns of participation



Continuing to explore the participatory trends of our sample, through a cross-tabulation we sought to examine how youngsters' quality of participation is distributed throughout their participation patterns. 'Political participation', the least representative group, with higher and more diverse experiences of participation, is mostly composed of university students from public (urban) schools, and presents the highest percentage of high-

quality participation, standing out from the other groups. Likewise, 'civic participation', a group of young adolescents and adults (11th graders and university students), from urban (mostly private) schools, also scores high on quality of participation. Those youngsters who present the lowest levels of participation score lowest on quality, compared with the others. Finally, the 'illegal participation' has medium and high quality participation experiences.

Lastly, cross-tabulating the contexts in which respondents engaged in, we can see that youngsters participating in youth political parties and in social and political movements or groups for more than 6 months report high-quality participation (80,6% and 77,3%, respectively). Also, a high percentage of those participating in volunteer associations or charity groups and in associations for human rights' protection for more than 6 months evaluate their experiences as high-quality (56,7% and 86,2%, respectively). Long-lasting participation in environmental organisations and animals' rights groups also has a high percentage of youngsters in high-quality groups (84,1%). As expected, few respondents with longer experiences belong to the low-quality participation group – proving the relationship between long-term involvement and quality participation.

Young groups, then, are quite diverse and so are their experiences. Still, it is possible to suggest that civic engagement and lifestyle/expressive activities seem to attract youngsters' attention, mostly among the urban youth. Also, there is a small but quite politicised group engaging in contexts favouring their personal development, and in which they practice democracy in meaningful and very diverse ways. These are the oldest among the youngsters, and they are mostly from urban (public) school environments. In its turn, the youngest group seems to be related to a kind of participatory experimentation phase, more characteristic of semi-urban locations, and scarcely politicized.

2.3. Can participation contribute to school success?

In the next section [Article 1] we seek to analyse how participation, including the quality of participation experiences, relates to school success by promoting competences of learning self-regulation. Higher-order cognition and high-quality participation may well be related, reinforcing the linkage between the pedagogical value of non-formal and formal settings.

2.3.1. **Linking learning contexts: The relationship between students' civic and political experiences and their self-regulation in school**

Malafaia, Carla; Teixeira, Pedro; Neves, Tiago & Menezes, Isabel (2016). Linking learning contexts: The relationship between students' civic and political experiences and their self-regulation in school. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, Article 575. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00575. [Impact factor: 2.463]

Abstract: This paper considers the relationship between self-regulation strategies and youth civic and political experiences, assuming that out-of-school learning can foster metacognition. The study is based on a sample of 732 Portuguese students from grades 8 and 11. Results show that the quality of civic and political participation experiences, together with academic self-efficacy, are significant predictors of young people's self-regulation, particularly regarding cognitive and metacognitive strategies (elaboration and critical thinking). Such effects surpass even the weight of family cultural and school variables, such as the sense of school belonging. Therefore, we argue that the pedagogical value of non-formal civic and political experiences is related to learning in formal pedagogical contexts. This is because civic and political participation with high developmental quality can stimulate higher-order cognitive engagement and, thus, contribute to the development of learning strategies that promote academic success.
Keywords: civic and political participation, quality of participation, metacognition, adolescent

Introduction

Scholars and policy makers alike have been discussing the importance of innovative learning and teaching methods in order to prevent early school leaving and prepare future adults to face adverse social contexts (Allen & Ainley, 2011; OECD, 2011). Also, at the higher education level, there is an increasing demand for learning models based on learners' autonomy and independency, as well as on their ability to actively

construct their own learning processes (Vermunt, 1996). These, together with high levels of qualification, are regarded as vital assets for preserving European welfare (European Commission, 2011; OECD, 2011).

Pedagogical experiences take place in a variety of contexts that are permeable to each other. Together, they contribute to the construction of the individual's world view, his/her perceived individual and collective influence, and his/her recognition of the possibilities and conditions to make choices. When students are capable of consciously controlling their learning processes, they acquire knowledge in personally meaningful ways and are therefore better able to achieve superior academic results (Kruger & Dunning, 1999; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011). It is important, then, to understand the phenomenon of learning regulation, which encompasses specific mental models of learning, learning orientations, cognitive processing, and metacognitive regulation strategies (Vermunt, 1996). Thus, adequate instructional strategies and learning models are crucial in promoting school attainment. Additionally, youth life contexts beyond the school are known to play a relevant role in promoting learning competencies (Allen & Ainley, 2011). It is now clear that educational variables are intrinsically connected with civic and political participation (Hadjar & Beck, 2010), and that school education impacts civic and political action and sophistication (Quintelier, 2010; Stockemer, 2014). Pleas are then made for an articulation between the school and society, in which instructional design enhances democratic citizenship, contributing "to the ability as well as the readiness of students to participate independently in a meaningful and critical way in concrete real social practices and activities" (ten Dam & Volman, 2004, p. 371). Also, the pedagogical value of such civic, participatory experiences needs to be recognized as they entail learning processes that improve higher-order skills. However, further research is necessary in order to bridge important research gaps.

So far, research has shown that students' participation in extra and co-curricular activities has a positive effect on their academic success (e.g., Mezuk et al., 2011; Roberts, 2007). Likewise, the students' ability to self- regulate their study through the development of metacognitive competencies has a positive e effect on their academic success (e.g., Rani & Govil, 2013). Kolb's learning models highlight the role of learner in his/her learning process, stressing the importance of concrete, contextualized experiences and of reflecting about them in the active construction of knowledge (Kolb, 1984; Demirbas & Demirkan, 2007). Additionally, several studies indicate that individuals with higher educational levels tend to be more civically and politically engaged (e.g., Nie et al., 1996; Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003). Lamm (2009) argues that

a link needs to be promoted between students' metacognitive reflection and political engagement, because critical thinking is crucial to increasing their ability to relate their skills to the real world, by reflecting on their learning experience. In other words, she argues that self-regulated learning is important for civic and political engagement.

Yet, civic and political participation experiences are not to be regarded as eminently or 'naturally' positive processes, but rather as experiences that, if they bring about developmental change, can be deemed pedagogical. Developmental quality of participation refers to a combination of features of experiences that take place in meaningful civic and political contexts; this combination is transformative, that is, it promotes more complex modes of comprehension and action (Ferreira et al., 2012). For a participation experience to be qualified as having high developmental quality, the following components need to be present: interaction with different points of view (as the integration of diversity and pluralism promotes cognitive development); reflection about one' own perspective and participation in such a compelling and challenging environment; action in and reflection on real, meaningful issues (involving personal implication and commitment; Ibidem). The transformative potential of action and reflection depends, then, on their complementarity, as well as on the duration of the experience, given that development requires long-term continuity. The potential of this approach is the focus on understanding the developmental quality of participation experiences within contexts not necessarily planned to promote developmental transformation.

This study seeks to explain the relationship between civic and political participation experiences and academic performance. We do so, by:

(a) Considering not only the experiences of participation *per se* but the developmental quality associated with such experiences, and

(b) Assessing academic performance through variables that consider the learning process in a more holistic and dynamic way, specifically through dimensions of self- regulated learning.

Therefore, we suggest sketching an innovative relationship, articulating learning processes that take place in different spheres of the students' lives (inside and outside school). We argue, then, that not only education leads to political knowledge and civic mobilization, but also that civic and political participation can result in educational gains – an approach that is under- researched.

Metacognition and School Performance

Learning is an active and constructive process, in which the learner plays an important role in building his/her own learning experience (Duffy & Jonassen, 1992), appropriating knowledge in a dynamic way (Bretz, 2001). Metacognition, the ability to think about thinking, is central in this process as it involves an awareness of the cognitive process and ability to control it (Flavell, 1976, 1987). Metacognition has two main components: knowledge about cognition and control/regulation of cognition (Baker and Brown, 1984; Applegate et al., 1994). Knowledge about cognition is related with knowledge about oneself as a learner, considering the characteristics of the task at hand and the strategies available to deal with it, as well as the strategy to apply at a given moment. The control or regulation of cognition concerns the ability to actively plan and evaluate the strategies and skills necessary to approach a specific task, planning the best way to do it, and the skill to reformulate the ongoing process (Baker, 2008). Both cognitive processing and metacognitive regulation lead to important learning results (Brown, 1987; Geisler-Brenstein et al., 1996).

Research on the relationship between metacognition and academic performance identifies its potential for learning enhancement, showing that students with higher levels of metacognition have above average school results (Rani & Govil, 2013). Some elements associated with metacognition are the ability to link concepts, promoting in-depth questioning and understanding (Stuever, 2006), the use of constructive processing strategies (Vermunt, 1998), the transferability and durability of learning (Bransford et al., 2000), task persistence, the competence to overcome frustrations and the regular exhibition of a sense of self-efficacy (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011). Furthermore, there is reciprocity between metacognitive awareness and control and learning improvement because they feed each other (Baker, 2008).

The Relationship between School Performance and Civic and Political Participation

Many studies articulate civic and political participation and school performance. In fact, the school is often regarded as an important element in redressing the worries about youth civic and political participation. This is a topic of social concern, as participation is a crucial feature of democracies. Schools are often considered spaces of political socialization due to their role in potentiating exposure to political messages and

providing opportunities for democratic education in practice (Torney-Purta, 2002b). Research on the relationship between the school and civic and political participation has been mostly grounded on two research strands: the effects of schooling on civic and political participation (Quintelier, 2010); and the impact of participation in schools, on students' academic performance (Dávila & Mora, 2007; Mezuk et al., 2011).

Schools can promote students' political participation by providing a stimulating environment for political discussion, fostering skills for understanding politics, and increasing levels of political interest and attention (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Jennings et al., 2009). Furthermore, the political science literature consistently underscores the intimate relationship between the level of education and the likelihood of participation (Verba et al., 1995; Nie et al., 1996; Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003). Thus, schools are proclaimed as vehicles for learning democratic skills and stimulating political involvement by promoting active learning strategies that involve the discussion of political topics (Regnerus, 2000), fostering engagement in school councils and "real life" activities (Regnerus, 2000; Gibson & Levine, 2003), and creating a participative school culture (Torney-Purta, 2002b).

Concerning the second research strand, some literature highlights how civic and political experiences can foster school achievement. Dávila and Mora (2007) analyze the relationship between participation in student government and community service on educational progress after grade 8, indicating that civic engagement promotes academic progress, increasing the odds of remaining in school and actually graduating from college. This study stands out as an important contribution to research focused on the flip side of the coin: that is, on showing that civic activities are a catalyst for educational attainment, as "civically engaged teenagers seemingly acquire higher levels of education on the average than their otherwise similar peers as they get older" (p. 16). Likewise, participation in extra-curricular activities (e.g., urban debate programs) bolsters academic attainment and progress, addressing achievement gaps for low-income and minority students (Mezuk et al., 2011), with some evidence that this is a long-term-effect (Roberts, 2007). Although extra-curricular activities are sometimes pointed out as taking time away from study, many researchers claim that these activities can actually improve the academic achievement of students, increasing their concentration, motivation and aspirations (Khan et al., 2012), as well as boosting their sense of school belonging (Mahoney, 2000), school interest, self-discipline, and academic self-efficacy (Marsh & Kleitman, 2002; Adeyemo, 2010).

Toward a Disciplinary Bridging: Pedagogical Experiences in Formal and Non-formal Educational Contexts

Youth experiences in schools and in civic and political contexts share a common, important goal: to provide youngsters the tools and opportunities to claim and establish their own place in society. The role of the school in fostering civic competencies is frequently emphasized, along with the idea, advocated by classic and current authors, that active and democratic citizenship should be experienced in relevant life contexts, creating opportunities to think and act (Dewey, 1916; Lawy & Biesta, 2006). An effective instruction process requires the promotion of students' involvement in school curricula and activities in a meaningful way, providing vast and diverse experiences (Dewey, 1938; Lawy & Biesta, 2006), supporting students' active engagement in their own learning process (Freire, 1985).

Classical authors in educational theory and psychological development pointed out key elements that promote the pedagogical character of learning experiences. Dewey (1916), Mead (1934), and Piaget (1941) have all stressed the importance of recognizing difference in self-development processes, since it promotes cognitive conflict, and therefore boosts psychological development. This Piagetian notion of 'reflective abstraction' can be found in other studies (Kohlberg, 1976; Lind, 2000) that also emphasize the opportunities provided by social interaction as sources of cognitive conflict. The dialogical contact with different perspectives within a challenging and supportive environment promotes cognitive-developmental change (Sprinthall, 1980). More recently, research on civic and political participation investigated their pedagogical value using the same criteria, particularly the potential for promoting opportunities for action and reflection (Menezes, 2003; Ferreira et al., 2012).

The effort of bridging the experiences in non-formal educational contexts and those inside schools entails great heuristic potential. This study seeks to move forward by articulating the pedagogical quality with the learning potential of formal and non-formal educational experiences. Our argument is that formal and non-formal pedagogical experiences are organized along a continuum and can both contribute to metacognition competences. Metacognition, recognizing the active role of the individual in self-regulating his/her learning process, is strongly correlated with academic success (Magno & Lajom, 2008) – and is surely stimulated by experiences of social interaction (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011) and cognitive conflict that are typical in many civic and political experiences (Ferreira et al., 2012). Thus, the pedagogical

quality of participation experiences might well be highly stimulating to metacognitive activity, and also mirror the metacognitive training developed in schools.

What is at stake in this paper is the pedagogical quality of formal and non-formal educational experiences, as they translate into opportunities for acting and reflecting upon, and during, the experience. To what extent are these experiences bridged, and how does this contribute to metacognition?

Materials and methods

In order to investigate how the quality of civic and political experiences relates to dimensions of metacognition we will consider the main predictors of students' learning strategies, and the relative role of individual characteristics, family cultural background, school variables and civic and political participation in this.

First, based on previous studies showing that gender and age are important variables in explaining metacognitive abilities (Liliana & Lavinia, 2011; Weil et al., 2013), we predict that these individual variables will help explain the variance in metacognition – Hypothesis 1.

Second, considering that school belonging and academic self-efficacy are crucial elements to fully understand academic performance (Pressley, 1986; Neves & Faria, 2006), we predict that academic self-efficacy – Hypothesis 2 – and sense of school belonging – Hypothesis 3 – will play the strongest role in contributing to metacognition.

Third, we expect that civic and political experiences will positively predict metacognition (Hypothesis 4), with high quality experiences predicting critical thinking skills more significantly (Hypothesis 5), as the quality of participation experiences is related with complex political thinking promoted by the confrontation with different points of view (Ferreira et al., 2012).

Forth, despite the fact that previous research has shown a positive association between family variables (parents' education and books at home) and students' educational attainment (Dávila & Mora, 2004), we expect that quality of participation, together with civic and political experiences, will exert a stronger predictive power than cultural capital, as other studies indicate that the developmental impact of the quality of participation can go beyond deficits associated with individual background (Fernandes-Jesus et al., 2012a) – Hypothesis 6.

Participants and Procedure

A total of 732 Portuguese students (53.8 % female) from Grades 8 (47.7%, *n* = 349) and 11 (52.3%, *n* = 383) participated in the study. Gender distribution is balanced in the Grade 8 subsample (Female = 173; Male = 176), and less so in Grade 11, with more than half of the sample (57.5%) being females (Female = 221; Male = 162).

Participants were asked to fill out a self-report questionnaire during classes, in schools from the north and center of Portugal, including urban and rural contexts. We obtained parental approval from all under-age participants. The average time needed for filling out the questionnaire was approximately 40 min. For this study, the dependent measures comprise two dimensions of metacognition: cognitive and metacognitive strategies and resource management strategies.

Measures

Metacognition

To investigate the metacognitive learning strategies, we used four sub-scales from the Portuguese version of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (Pintrich et al., 1991; Melo et al., 2006); a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree) was used. The scale included the following sub-scales: Elaboration (e.g., "I try to connect ideas of each subject with ideas of other subjects"; four items – Cronbach's a = 0.81), Critical Thinking (e.g., "I treat the subjects' material as a starting point and try to develop my own ideas about it"; five items – Cronbach's a = 0.85), Effort Regulation (e.g., "Even when subjects' materials are dull and uninteresting, I manage to keep working until I finish"; four items – Cronbach's a = 0.70), and Peer Learning (e.g., "I try to work with other colleagues, in order to finish my school work"; four items – Cronbach's a = 0.71). Taking into account our sample size[22], confirmatory factor analysis showed an acceptable fit of the measurement model of metacognition [$X^2(115) = 748.883$; $p \leq 0.000$; $X^2/df = 6.512$; CFI = 0.905; RMSEA = 0.070; SRMR = 0.0628]. The scales were created with equally weighted items based on the similarity in the magnitudes of the factor loadings (Spector, 1992), a strategy we used for all the scales.

[22] Confirmatory factor analysis and other procedures regarding the dimensionality of the questionnaires were performed on a larger sample of 1107 students that includes a sub-sample of higher education students.

Civic and Political Participation Experiences (PCP)

To explore the levels of civic and political participation during the last 12 months we adapted the Portuguese version of the Political Action Scale (Lyons, 2008; Menezes et al., 2012a), using seven items (e.g., "attend a public meeting or demonstration dealing with political or social issues"; "do volunteer work"; "wear a bracelet, sign or other symbol to show support for a social or political cause"; "boycott or buy certain products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons"; "link news, music or videos with a social or political content to my contacts"). The youngsters rated the question "Have I done the following activities during the last 12 months?" The response options ranged from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very often). The reliability of the whole scale was a = 0.68.

Quality of Participation Experiences (QEP)

The Participation Experiences Questionnaire (QEP) is a self- report measure created by Ferreira and Menezes (2001, Unpublished) that operationalises the theoretical construct underlying the developmental quality of experiences. The first part requires that individuals consider their civic and political experiences in a range of contexts (youth associations, political youth parties, volunteer groups, etc.), identifying their duration (Never; Occasionally; Less than 6 months; 6 months or more). In the second part, individuals assess their most significant experience in terms of the opportunities for action and reflection; in other words, its "potential for engaging in meaningful issues; solving real-life problems; expressing their own views; and, interacting with different others within a context that values pluralism and allows for analyzing the personal meaning of this experience" (Ferreira et al., 2012, p. 601). This second part includes two dimensions: opportunities for action, with four items (e.g., "to participate in activities (such as petitions, protests, parties, meetings, assemblies, debates, public statements, etc.)"; Cronbach's a = 0.77) and opportunities for reflection, with four items (e.g., "different perspectives were discussed"; "conflicting opinions gave rise to new ways of looking at the issues"; Cronbach's a = 0.83), using a 5-point Likert- type scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very often). The confirmatory factor analysis performed for the whole sample [X^2/df = 5,471; CFI = 0.981, GFI = 0.981; PGFI = 0.436; RMSEA = 0.064; *P*(rmsea <=0.05) = 0.039] corroborates the reliability and validity of the scale, as in other national and international studies (Ferreira et al., 2012; Menezes et al., 2012a).

The Quality of Participation Experiences is not given directly by QEP but results from a clustering procedure that "combines both the action and reflection dimension of participation experiences by classifying participants into groups that distinctly articulate both dimensions" (Ferreira et al., 2012, p. 603). Multiple cluster analyses (Hastie et al., 2009) were employed to classify participation experiences on the basis of similarity derived from the scores of QEP subscales. The squared Euclidean distance was used as proximity measure in an agglomerative hierarchical clustering method. Fusions were made by Ward's method. The number of clusters was determined by dendrogram, implementing the elbow criterion, and the development of error sum of squares. Finally, the *K*-means procedure was implemented for optimizing the cluster solution. *K*-means is a partition based clustering method to minimize the sum of squared error over all clusters. The three adjusted clusters solution explains about 70% of the variance for both the 8th and the 11th grades. Because we are also interested in the 'non participants,' we then added the group with "no participation experiences," which had not been included in the clustering procedure. Therefore, the final variable has four classified groups: No Participation [N = 18 (8th grade); N = 43 (11th grade)]; low quality of participation [N = 82 (8th grade); N = 89 (11th grade)]; medium quality of participation [N = 130 (8th grade); N = 148 (11th grade)]; high quality of participation [N = 119 (8th grade); N = 103 (11th grade)]. In subsequent analysis we considered only two clusters: low quality [Action (8th grade: x = 1,43; 11th grade: x = 1,64); Reflection (8th grade: x = 1,54; 11th grade: x = 2,05)] and high quality [Action (8th grade: x = 3,64; 11th grade: x = 4,22); Reflection (8th grade: x = 4,13; 11th grade: x = 4,35)].

School Variables

As students' general attitudes towards the school and themselves have a great impact on their thoroughness in study (Weinstein & Palmer, 1990; Neves & Faria, 2006), we included scales on school belonging and academic self-efficacy. Both dimensions were assessed in a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree).

Six items were used to tap students' *sense of school belonging* ("This school means a lot to me" or "I have friends in this school"). Internal consistency was satisfactory, with Cronbach's a = 0.78.

To investigate students' *academic self-efficacy*, which includes expectations about their school performance (including exams, study competences and participation in

classroom), we translated and adapted the scale created by Smith et al. (1999) using seven items (e.g., "I believe I can develop good study skills"; "I think I will go as far as I like in school"). Internal consistency was good, Cronbach's a = 0.86.

Additionally, we also considered the *expected level of school attainment* (1 = Basic education; 2 = Secondary education; 3 = Vocational course; 4 = Bachelor; 4 = Master degree; 5 = PhD).

Family Variables

Cultural capital was assessed by asking students about their *father's educational level* – the response scale ranged from 1 (never attended school) to 5 (attended or finished higher education) – and the *number of books at home* (less than 10, between 10 and 100, and more than 100 books). These are good indicators of learning opportunities (Buchmann, 2002), and cultural capital (Lopes et al., 2009), which in turn have a significant effect on civic and political participation (Amadeo et al., 2002; Menezes et al., 2012a) and on metacognitive and self-regulatory skills (Lipina & Colombo, 2009).

Individual Variables

Regarding the effect of students' participation on their metacognition, we took *gender* and *age* as individual predictor variables – the former as a dummy-coded variable –, given the variance they usually introduce on participation and metacognition levels.

Data Analysis Procedures

Linear Regressions

To grasp the predictive effect of combining in- and out-of-school experiences on metacognitive dimensions, we performed linear regressions with the following predictors organized in blocks:

(a) Age, gender;

(b) Expected level of school attainment, parents' educational level and books at home;

(c) School belonging and academic self-efficacy;

(d) Experiences of civic and political participation (PCP) and quality of participation experiences (QEP).

Results

Table 1 presents the model summary for linear regression predicting elaboration. The percentage of variance explained is 42% (Table 1). Gender and age explain 2% of the variance, a value that rises to 15% when considering family cultural background factors (books at home, father's level of education and expected level of school attainment). Tolerance values are always high (>0.10) therefore multicolinearity among predictors does not appear to be a problem. School variables play a very significant role, which slightly increases (around 4%) when including out-of-school civic and political experiences. The major significant predictor is academic achievement, followed by civic and political participation and high quality experiences, and finally gender (female), expected level of school attainment and school belonging (Table 2).

Table 1- *Model summary for linear regressions on Elaboration*

					Change Statistics				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	152	,023	,020	,80037	,023	8,362	2	704	,000
2	,381	,145	,139	,75040	,122	33,295	3	701	,000
3	,625	,391	,384	,63444	,246	140,828	2	699	,000
4	,655	,429	,420	,61562	,038	15,468	3	696	,000

[a] Predictors: (Constant), sex_Male, Age

[b] Predictors: (Constant), a + books at home, expected level of school attainment, father's level of education

[c] Predictors: (Constant), a + b + school belonging, academic self-efficacy

[d] Predictors: (Constant), a + b + c + PCP, Low quality experiences, High quality experiences

Table 2 – *Regression coefficients on Elaboration*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95,0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics
	beta	St Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance
4 (Constant)				,332	,740	-,540	,759	
Age	,016	,014	,035	1,156	,248	-,012	,044	,893
sex_Male	-,107	,047	-,066	-2,260	*,024*	-,201	-,014	,956
books at home	,049	,026	,064	1,893	,059	-,002	,099	,717
expected level of school attainment	,045	,021	,072	2,175	*,030*	,004	,086	,750
father's level of education	-,037	,027	-,047	-1,374	,170	-,089	,016	,706
school belonging	,086	,041	,067	2,095	*,037*	,005	,167	,799
academic self-efficacy	,612	,041	,509	15,033	*,000*	,532	,692	,717
PCP	,143	,038	,117	3,789	*,000*	,069	,218	,859
Low quality experiences	-,097	,060	-,051	-1,597	,111	-,215	,022	,820
High quality experiences	,169	,057	,097	2,996	*,003*	,058	280	,791

The percentage of variance explained by the linear regression model on critical thinking is 38% (Table 3). Tolerance values are always high (>0.10) therefore multicolinearity among predictors does not appear to be a problem. Again, school level variables play an important predictive role, but so do civic and political experiences (Table 4). The significant predictors are academic self-efficacy, followed by high quality experiences and civic and political participation, and finally gender (male) and age (negatively).

The model summary for peer learning (Table 5) explains 26% of the variance. Tolerance values are always high (>0.10), therefore multicolinearity among predictors does not appear to be a problem. Although the percentages of variance explained are lower than in the previous metacognitive dimensions, in peer learning both school and out-of-school variables seems to play an important role. The significant predictors are academic self-efficacy, the quality of participation (positively, when high, negatively, when low), civic and political participation, gender (female), school belonging and books at home (negatively; Table 6). Finally, this model does not explain a relevant percentage of variance for effort regulation (7,3%).

Table 3 – *Model summary for linear regressions on Critical Thinking*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	,158a	,025	,022	,80726	,025	8,999	2	703	,000
2	,329b	,108	,102	,77363	,083	21,817	3	700	,000
3	,565c	,319	,313	,67687	,211	108,218	2	698	,000
4	,618d	,381	,372	,64669	,062	23,220	3	695	,000

[a] Predictors: (Constant), sex_Male, Age

[b] Predictors: (Constant), a + books at home, expected level of school attainment, father's level of education

[c] Predictors: (Constant), a + b + school belonging, academic self-efficacy

[d] Predictors: (Constant), a + b + c + PCP, Low quality experiences, High quality experiences

Table 4 – *Regression coefficients on Critical Thinking*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95,0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics
	beta	St Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance
4 (Constant)				2,783	,006	,285	1,650	
Age	-,031	,015	-,066	-2,094	*,037*	-,061	-,002	,893
sex_Male	,105	,050	,064	2,101	*,036*	,007	,203	,957
books at home	,010	,027	,013	,382	,702	-,043	,063	,718
expected level of school attainment	,029	,022	,046	1,330	,184	-,014	,072	,750
father's level of education	-,004	,028	-,005	-,142	,887	-,059	,051	,705
school belonging	,035	,043	,027	,817	,414	-,050	,120	,801
academic self-efficacy	,573	,043	,472	13,400	*,000*	,489	,657	,719
PCP	,150	,040	,121	3,764	*,000*	,072	,228	,859
Low quality experiences	-,094	,063	-,049	-1,486	,138	-,219	,030	,820
High quality experiences	,287	,060	,162	4,820	*,000*	,170	,404	,790

Table 5 – *Model summary for linear regressions on Peer-learning*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	,180	,033	,030	,80005	,033	11,826	2	703	,000
2	,249	,062	,055	,78955	,029	7,275	3	700	,000
3	,434	,188	,180	,73549	,126	54,344	2	698	,000
4	,509	,259	,249	,70406	,071	22,240	3	695	,000

[a] Predictors: (Constant), sex_Male, Age

[b] Predictors: (Constant), a + books at home, expected level of school attainment, father's level of education

[c] Predictors: (Constant), a + b + school belonging, academic self-efficacy

[d] Predictors: (Constant), a + b + c + PCP, Low quality experiences, High quality experiences

Table 6 – *Regression coefficients on Peer-learning*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95,0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics
	beta	St Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance
4 (Constant)				3,464	,001	,568	2,054	
Age	-,004	,016	-,009	-,273	,785	-,036	,028	,893
sex_Male	-,167	,054	-,103	-3,076	*,002*	-,274	-,060	,957
books at home	-,058	,029	-,076	-1,963	*,050*	-,116	,000	,718
expected level of school attainment	,034	,024	,054	1,440	,150	-,012	,081	,750
father's level of education	-,041	,031	-,052	-1,340	,181	-,101	,019	,705
school belonging	,141	,047	,109	2,987	*,003*	,048	,233	,801
academic self-efficacy	,372	,047	,308	7,995	*,000*	,281	,464	,719
PCP	,159	,043	,130	3,684	*,000*	,074	,244	,859
Low quality experiences	-,150	,069	-,078	-2,174	*,030*	-,286	-,015	,820
High quality experiences	,274	,065	,155	4,225	*,000*	,147	,401	,790

Discussion

Our results suggest that youth experiences in both schools and communities promote important learning competences. The articulation between these two pedagogical spheres enables grasping the bigger picture of the learning process, valuing experiences inside and outside the school, and suggesting that instructional strategies should acknowledge the pedagogical value of civic and political experiences that can stimulate crucial competences for academic performance.

Concerning the influence of gender in explaining metacognition, our results seem to echo the argument about the ambivalent role of gender in self-regulation (Bidjerano, 2005), as our results favor female students regarding elaboration and peer-learning, but indicate the positive influence of being male on critical thinking. Therefore, despite the fact that results are ambivalent, gender plays a role in predicting metacognition (Hypothesis 1). With regard to age, the results do not corroborate the research indicating that metacognition improve with age (Weil et al., 2013): in our study, age does not significantly explain variances in students' metacognition, exception made to critical thinking, in which the younger group (8th grade) is more likely to make critical evaluations of ideas and academic content (Hypothesis 1).

Although school belonging, an important variable in explaining academic achievement (Moallem, 2013), predicts peer-learning and elaboration, its role is always less significant than civic and political participation (not confirming the Hypothesis 3). As expected, academic self-efficacy has the highest predictive power in explaining variances in students' metacognition (supporting Hypothesis 2). Civic and political variables generally come up second to academic self-efficacy, be it when we consider high quality experiences (Hypothesis 5) or the involvement in civic and political activities (Hypothesis 4). The developmental quality of participation seems to make the difference (compared to mere civic and political engagement) regarding peer-learning, and particularly critical thinking (consistent with Hypothesis 5).

The linear regression model unveils a weak association between our model (which combines participation and schooling variables) and resources management strategies, particularly regarding effort regulation (explaining only 7,3% of its variance), and peer-learning (explaining just 26% of its variance). Still, the unusual combination of variables in our model explains a considerable percentage of variance in metacognition, with civic and political experiences (including quality of participation) predicting

almost all dimensions, even more than cultural capital variables (parents' level of education and books at home) – supporting Hypothesis 6. Furthermore, when analyzing metacognition skills, the influence of meaningful civic and political experiences that promote opportunities for reflection in supportive and challenging relational contexts seems to transcend the role of the sense of school belonging, which, while being also a contextual variable, is nonetheless related to the meaning individual's attribute to school – this is particularly clear regarding critical thinking, in which the quality of participation exerts a strong predictive power, while the sense of school belonging is not a significant predictor. Our results highlight the relevance of combining academic self-efficacy – an individual variable related with the level of engagement and commitment with schooling – with civic and political life experiences. Additionally, it is worth noting that the developmental quality of participation plays a major role in explaining students' metacognition levels – generally in addition to simple experiences of civic and political participation.

Indeed, experiences of civic and political participation may have an important role mainly in fostering the ability to link and transfer concepts, and to building a learning process based on questioning and critical thinking (Hypothesis 4 and 5). The model shows that metacognition is also stimulated by experiences favoring cognitive conflict and social perspective taking, as happens in civic and political participation experiences with high developmental quality. This is consistent with previous research that demonstrates the positive effects of high quality participation experiences at the individual level (Ferreira et al., 2012). These results suggest that this line of research does have potential and deserves further exploration. Previous studies already show that academic performance can be improved by students participation in sports (Khan et al., 2012), in policy debate programs (Mezuk et al., 2011), in extra-curricular activities (Roberts, 2007), or in community service (Schmidt et al., 2007). Our results go beyond school-based participation experiences, showing the role of out-of-school civic and political participation (particularly if combined with academic self-efficacy) in metacognition.

By adding the cognitive processes involved in school performance, this research bridges the research gap in the relationship between cognitive processes involved in civic and political participation (the cognitive conflict, crucial to cognitive development, which is present in contexts promoting quality of participation) and those that contribute to educational success (metacognition). In order to be self-regulated, students should be active participants in their own learning, knowing how to think and how to adapt and

modify learning strategies in order to achieve their academic goals. In the same way, for civic and political participation to be considered meaningful and transformative, it must entail balanced opportunities for action and reflection in a supportive context, facilitating cognitive conflict in order to promote development. Lamm (2009, p. 92) already suggests a similar connection when she argues that self-regulated learning should be linked to political engagement, stating that "students should be provided with opportunities to connect the attributes they are learning with real-world opportunities to practice them [. . .] students need to be metacognitive about those attributes, which is referred to as self-regulated learning." The results presented in this paper corroborate the relevance and need for such a connection; additionally, they show that civic and political experiences (particularly when they are personally meaningful, in terms of developmental quality) can also play an important role in fostering important competences for school success.

Annette (2006), discussing the application of Kolb's pedagogy of experiential learning to citizenship education, emphasizes that students learn not just through volunteering and civic engagement, but through reflection on their experience. By giving due consideration to the political realm, this study adds to the existing literature. Indeed, just like the pedagogical efforts in developing experiential learning as a way of improving academic performance have yet to "go beyond traditional volunteering and doing good works and link the service learning with political knowledge, skills, and understanding" (Annette, 2006, p. 1), research on academic performance, while dealing extensively with the impacts of civic participation – particularly school-based participation –, falls short of considering the specific impacts of political participation. It appears, then, that there is a widespread preference for the non-political. This, of course, is in itself a revealing choice, as the presumably more sensitive, tricky field of politics is left outside the radar of intervention and analysis. Therefore, we agree with Cress et al. (2010) when they argue that there is a "promising connection" between civic engagement and academic success, one which deserves further attention. In line with these authors, we strongly believe in the importance of bridging in-and out-of-school learning. In fact, we know, since Dewey (1916), that in order to increase the individual and collective relevance of learning, the school must be connected to the community, which ultimately leads us to the relevance of considering the quality of participation experiences.

Conclusion

By articulating the field of metacognition with civic and political participation this paper brings together two research domains that have, as yet, been mostly estranged from each other. We hope to have shown that there are relevant connections between them and, thus, hope to be contributing to this emerging field. In particular, we would like to emphasize that the relationship between the quality of participation experiences and the metacognitive learning strategies of a more dialectical and conflictual nature (elaboration and critical thinking) seems to provide added strength to the pertinence of the study of this topic, namely because there are clear educational implications stemming from it. Indeed, improvements in learning may result from a better articulation between the school and civic and political participation. Educational agents need to recognize this linkage. Further research is needed in order to clearly understand the impact of civic and political variables on academic success: (a) eventually establishing causality relations between civic and political behaviors and self-regulated learning; (b) determining what are the contexts and forms of participation that impact more strongly on self-regulated learning; and (c) assessing how the pedagogical value of civic and political experiences can compensate for the negative influence that cultural, economic and social disadvantages have on school performance. Longitudinal studies could be of added value in understanding these links. Our study participates in and contributes to this debate, demonstrating the pertinence of such questions.

Acknowledging the pedagogical value of civic and political participation, namely high quality experiences, equates to acknowledging the permeability of formal and non-formal educational contexts. Ultimately, then, this means acknowledging that there is a link between the definition and development of democratic citizenship and the choices made regarding modes of teaching and learning, and indeed the very configuration of the educational system. Disciplines such as history and sociology have pointed to this relationship from their particular viewpoints (Zeigler & Peak, 1970; Benavot, 1996). Here we provide different, added strength to this thesis by demonstrating its validity from an interdisciplinary viewpoint.

2.4. Socio-economic status and participation

The next section [Article 2] will explore the effects of socioeconomic variables, related to school and family context, on youngsters' political and civic participation, and political knowledge. Type of school, economic capital and cultural capital will be mobilised in order to understand how unequal opportunities and resources influence political participation and literacy among young people.

2.4.1. **In-between fatalism and leverage: The different effects of socioeconomic variables on students' civic and political experiences and literacy**

Malafaia, Carla; Neves, Tiago & Menezes, Isabel (accepted for publication). In-between fatalism and leverage: The different effects of socioeconomic variables on students' civic and political experiences and literacy. *Journal of Social Sciences Education.*

Abstract

Purpose: This article explores the classical relationship between socioeconomic status and political domains, and the need to include different variables (contextual and individual) to measure the effect of economic and cultural capitals on youth participation and knowledge.

Method: A multivariate analysis of covariance was performed on a sample of 732 Portuguese students, from Grades 8 and 11, in order to analyse how different socioeconomic variables related to family and schooling contexts have an effect on their political knowledge and experiences.

Findings: The article highlights the differential role of socioeconomic variables on political knowledge and participatory patterns. Low economic capital instigates participation, while high cultural capital is related with higher political literacy. However, both forms of capital interact with the schooling context, revealing more complex patterns of behaviour and knowledge in students attending public and private schools.

Keywords: young people, civic and political participation, political literacy, economic and cultural capital, public and private school

Introduction

The topic of social inequality is crucial with regard to democracy's health. When socioeconomic conditions are very unevenly distributed across groups, the very notion of common well-being and the most basic forms of social bonds are put in jeopardy, as

severe wealth gaps generate a decrease in social trust (Uslaner & Brown, 2005). An unequal distribution of resources and power entails different abilities of influencing political institutions (Cabral, 1997) and an unequal distribution of interests in the public sphere (van Deth, Montero, & Westholm, 2007). The groups that enjoy higher levels of economic and cultural capital are more likely to be acquainted with the most effective means to have their interests represented and to shape the social structure in ways that suit them better. Civic and political participation and the perception of the ability to make one's voice heard are, then, very much dependent on how well endowed with socioeconomic resources citizens are.

Inequalities in socioeconomic resources tend to be reproduced in civic and political participation (Badescu & Neller, 2007), even if the effects of this relationship are complex and multidimensional. People in the margins of society may feel particularly propelled to political involvement (Kornhauser, 2010) or, contrariwise, have their participation hindered due to the perception that society is too unequal and they do not fit the way the political system is organised (Uslaner & Brown, 2005). When studying youth civic and political participation, the school and the family are the most influential contexts: they are important socialising contexts and, at the same time, defining environments of socioeconomic status. The families' cultural capital is highly related to economic capital and the way specific groups take advantage of social institutions (Bourdieu, 2010 [1979]), also impacting significantly on students' academic results (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000) and on their progress in the educational system (Gorard, 2010). That is, cumulative disadvantages and the reproduction of inequalities are an increasingly serious matter, as social inequality continues to rise. Data from 'Inequality Watch', analysing the impact of austerity in several countries, highlight that in 2011 the disposable income of the richest 20% in Portugal was 5,8 times higher than the income of the poorest 20%[23], and an OECD (2015) report shows that the unemployment rates have been increasing in the last years.

The economic and social crisis around the globe, and particularly in Europe, frames the context in which we collected the data presented in this paper. We will present a multivariate analysis of variance to understand whether and how socioeconomic variables (namely cultural capital, economic capital and type of school) are related to the political literacy and behaviour of 732 Portuguese students from the 8th and 11th grades. In this manner, we seek to better understand how socioeconomic differentiation (measured with variables related to family and school contexts) operates

[23] http://www.inequalitywatch.eu/spip.php?article192&id_mot=80&lang=fr

regarding diverse experiences of participation (civic and political, collective and individual, online and offline) and political knowledge.

Socioeconomic status and participation: a debate that still matters

Socioeconomic inequalities are a classical, central topic in the social sciences (Weber, 1978; Marx, 1979; Durkheim, 1991; Bourdieu, 2010 [1979]; Giddens, 2013). They are regarded as a decisive organising feature of vast aspects of the life in our societies. Civic and political participation is one of those aspects. It comes as no surprise, then, that the link between civic and political participation and socioeconomic inequalities has also become a well-established research topic (e.g., Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Saeed, 2015; Carvalho, 2014; Caínzos & Voces, 2010; Nunes & Carmo, 2010; Nunes, 2013; Silva & Vieira, 2011; Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003; Schlozman, Verba, & Brady, 2012). This means that research on civic and political participation needs to consider the individual and socioeconomic conditions that promote or hinder it. The work of Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) is particularly relevant here. They argue that different levels of resources, cognitive involvement and engagement in social networks have a major impact on the ability to influence political processes and institutions.

It is consensual in the literature that the distribution of power across society is largely determined by ownership of and access to a certain volume of resources (be they money, education or social connections), as socioeconomic and political inequalities feed each other (e.g., Lijphart, 1997; Verba et al., 1995; Bourdieu, 2010 [1979]; Uslaner & Brown, 2005). The concept of social class has typically been instrumental in accounting for these processes, as it is a potentially organised way to grasp the complexity and multidimensionality associated with the differential distribution of resources and power, according to different social positions (Bourdieu, 2010 [1979]). Authors such as Carvalho (2012), Caínzos and Voces (2010) and Cabral (2000) argue that social class is still a valid sociological tool to analyse phenomena such as participation. However, Pakulski and Waters' work, "The Death of Class" (1996), claims that in post-modern societies the linear and stable correspondence between the objective and subjective features of social classes is gone: identities and social practices are now defined based on specific life-styles and collectively shared values, rather than by one's location in the network of social relations of production. Individualization, globalization and reflexivity render the social organisation more fluid (Beck, 2007), and

consequently social classes become less appropriate to understand inequality. The increasing relevance of post-materialistic values in politics (Inglehart, 1997) goes along with the argument about the heterogeneity of social groups and the decline of materialistic cleavages. Yet, in many countries, the Welfare State continues to fall short of reducing income gaps, and access to economic, social and cultural resources is still very unevenly distributed, preserving patterns of inequality based on the distance between classes (Nunes, 2013; Silva & Vieira, 2011). Portuguese research in this field shows that groups with greater resources at their disposal, mostly with higher levels of education, clearly stand out concerning political citizenship (Carvalho, 2012). Caínzos and Voces (2010) are quite straightforward in stressing the political relevance of class, considering that "in the field of political participation, class still matters. A significant and substantively meaningful association between class and political action can be observed in most European countries" (p. 407). An uneven distribution of capitals, is, then, very relevant in shaping participatory dispositions (Lamprianou, 2013).

The multidimensionality of socioeconomic status and its relation to youth participation

In research about youth civic and political participation, the variables used to measure socioeconomic status differ widely (Quintelier & Hooghe, 2013). Yet, there is a relative consensus that socioeconomic status is overall well defined by income, education and occupation (Schulz & Brese, 2008). Some authors choose one or two of these indicators as proxy variables for socio-economic status, such as the number of books at home alone (Lopes, Brenton & Cleaver, 2009) or parents' education and family income (Saeed, 2015). In the research field of civic and political participation, the variables most often used are income, education, occupational status and the number of books at home (Quintelier & Hooghe, 2013). Regarding education and income, studies show that the poorest and the less educated are those who are less likely to be politically active (Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996; Verba et al., 1995; Van Deth & Elff, 2000; Quintelier & Hooghe, 2013; Dahl, 2006; Kay & Friesen, 2011). Along with the occupational status, these variables have a profound effect on the possibilities of individual choice and political behaviour (Adler, Boyce, Chesney, Cohen, Folkman, Kahn, & Syme, 1994; Manza & Brooks, 2008). Jacobs and Skopol (2005) clearly stressed the political and democratic impact of such disadvantage: "the voices of citizens with lower or moderate incomes are lost on the ears of inattentive public

officials, while the advantaged roar with a clarity and consistency that policymakers readily hear and routinely follow" (p. 1).

The elements used by researchers to address socioeconomic status are inextricably linked, often pointing to what has been named a "clustering of hardships" (Pacheco & Plutzer, 2008, p. 577): people with higher incomes are often more educated and vice-versa, and also have more books at home and probably belong to a network that shares high social capital (Verba et al., 1995; Wattenberg, 2007). As a result, they tend to display high levels of political knowledge and interest (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Nie et al., 1996). On the contrary, lower-socioeconomic status elicits beliefs of inability to influence politics: people feel they cannot take advantage of social opportunities nor have the skills to navigate the social institutions and networks that might potentially lead them to success (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2006). Krauss (2015) shows that perceptions of low-class rank are detrimental to both political efficacy and political behaviours such as signing petitions and being interested in the Government's activities. Socioeconomic status – the social, economic and cultural capitals associated to it – is transmitted from parents to children, as they share the same environment (e.g., Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Beck & Jennings, 1982). Thus, the educational level of the parents is highlighted by some authors as a powerful ingredient in understanding the puzzle of cumulative disadvantage in young people (Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Pacheco & Plutzer, 2008). Age is, then, another important individual dimension to take into account. Younger people, namely those with low levels of education, participate less than adults (Vecchione & Caprara, 2009; Stolle & Hooghe, 2009). Civic and political participation continues to be a sphere of adults, at least in the youngsters' point of view, who see themselves as being regarded as too immature to be fully involved in politics (Smith, et al., 2005); this relegated condition is further aggravated by their financial dependency from their parents (Arnett, 2000; Lister, 2007).

It is crucial to recognise that young people, far from being a homogeneous group, are in a situation in which cumulative differences (in contextual background, educational attainment, cultural and economic capital) may predict their political activities (Lamprianou, 2013). Some research suggests that more educated youths, with more economic resources, may replace conventional politics with new ways of engagement (Wray-Lake & Hart, 2012; Syvertsen, Wray-Lake, Flanagan, Osgood & Briddell, 2011). On the other hand, Caínzos and Voces (2010) found that the new forms of civic and political engagement reveal deeper class differences than conventional political action, most notably voting. Nunes and Carmo (2010), explaining collective

action in Europe, state that the overlap between different types of capital (economic, social and cultural) has a clear effect on political behaviour. To be sure, different practices always require different resources, and this may help explaining political activity in a more reliable manner than psychological variables alone.

Such constructs are not independent of the classical sociological contributions on social inequality. Bourdieu (2010 [1979]) is perhaps one of the most influential sociological authors analysing the way different kinds of resources (capitals) contribute to distinctions between social groups. Economic capital can be directly converted into money, being related to family income and wealth. In its turn, cultural capital, namely its objectified and institutionalized state, is related to cultural goods (such as books) and academic credentials (levels of education) (Ibid.). In this article we follow this understanding that socioeconomic status is mainly related to financial and educational resources. We do not refer to social class once we do not have all the indicators necessary for that. Instead, we rest on the comprehensiveness of the concepts of cultural and economic capital to assess socioeconomic status. We adopt the concept of cultural capital because we include the parents' level of education, the number of books at home and the expected level of education - likewise what De Groof, Elchardus, Franck and Kavadias (2008) have done in assessing cultural capital as a standardized measure consisting of these three variables. The expectations on further education, although a subjective variable, have been proving consistent in explaining political participation (Quintelier & Hooghe, 2013); indeed, they are one of the most powerful predictors of civic knowledge in European countries, alongside home educational resources (Torney-Purta, 2002a). Plus, we consider that this dimension adds flexibility to the concept of cultural capital – considering the critiques to Bourdieu's theory regarding its deterministic nature. Economic capital, which according to Bourdieu may facilitate the acquisition of cultural capital (2010 [1979]), is most often measured through family income and wealth (Schulz & Brese, 2008). However, it is likely that some youngsters lack knowledge about it, which would yield inconsistent data (Torney-Purta et al. 1999). Yet, their perception about financial difficulties in the family context may contribute to a reliable depiction of economic capital, once youngsters short on this type of resource will constrain their attitudes and behaviours. Finally, the type of school, potentially reflecting both forms of capital and, thus, youngsters' socioeconomic status, is considered an important variable to account for. Young people from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds have different access to the kinds of opportunities usually stimulated in settings such as schools (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Such contexts

represent opportunities to learn about civic issues, by discussing them with others, learning different perspectives, and constructing one's own political views (Flanagan & Levine, 2010).

Highlighting the schooling context: private and public schools

The school is one of the most important youth socialization settings, and educational attainment impacts students' political knowledge and their civic and political participation. Education can drive the transformation or the reproduction of previous patterns of inequality (Junn, 2000). Its influence on political activity, however, is complex and may not be uniform regarding different political activities. One could argue that accounting for the type of school (public, free or private, fee-paying) in which the student is enrolled in is virtually equivalent to considering the student's socioeconomic status. Yet, this is not necessarily true. Families can try to compensate for their lack of economic and cultural capital by making an extra effort to have their children in a private school, whereas middle/high-status families often have their children in public schools. Still, it is important to take into consideration how the type of school contributes to civic and political participation, as different schools provide different opportunities. However, the type of school youngsters attend is often ignored in the literature that deals with the processes of civic and political involvement (Campbell, 2008; Macedo, 2000). Although the disadvantages related with family background are very important to understand youths' political involvement, such factors can be magnified by unequal opportunities at school, such as community voluntary service or students' assemblies (Flanagan & Levine, 2010).

Many authors would argue that looking at schools is crucial, as it may unveil whether students are learning values of universalism or individualism (Dreeben, 1968), which have a long-term influence on their stances towards public issues (Sikkink, 2013). Emanating from private groups, the curricula and the educational projects of private schools are not subject to the same constraints and uniformity as those imposed on public schools. Some argue that such schools may not be overwhelmingly concerned with taking into account the diversity that always characterizes any given community, thus raising questions about their commitment to democratic citizenship and public values (Gutmann, 1987; Macedo, 2000). On the other hand, there is research showing that students from secondary private schools score higher on political tolerance (Wolf, Greene, Kleitz & Thalhammer, 2000) and participate more in volunteer services than

their public counterparts (Greene, 1998). Likewise, Campbell (2000) found out that, despite differences in family background, private schools are as effective as public schools in conveying civic knowledge. In the same vein, Sikkink (2013) analyses the hidden civic lessons in public and private schools, concluding that private schools display organizational strengths (collective identity and normative climate) that effectively promote students' participation in public institutions. This is in line with previous research that had already pinpointed the hierarchical and bureaucratic traits that often characterise public schools, jeopardizing the creation of a collective identity (Brint, Contreras & Matthews, 2001). Therefore, relational trust and civic-minded practices seem to find ground to grow and develop in private schools (Sikkink, 2013). Such findings raise obvious concerns about students' experience of public schools, and call for further research in this field. It therefore appears crucial to include the different types of school, along with socioeconomic variables related to family, in analyses that seek to understand the civic and political participation patterns of youngsters.

In sum, then, our analytical framework, grounded on the classical theme of socioeconomic inequalities, explores the role of socioeconomic status – assessed here through the dimensions of cultural capital, economic capital and type of school - on political knowledge and political participation patterns of young people.

The socioeconomic context and the educational system in Portugal

The data analysed in this paper were collected in 2013, during a context in which "Portugal is going through one of the worst economic crises in its long history as a sovereign state" (de Sousa, Magalhães & Amaral, 2014, p. 1528). Massive demonstrations – in which young people had a leading role – took place in 2011 and 2012. They were clear signs of rebellion against the Government's political choices, and the austerity imposed by the Troika (composed by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund) as result of the bailout, and the rises in unemployment, precariousness and social inequalities. Unemployment struck hardest the highly-educated young people and first-time job seekers (de Sousa et al., 2014); and many of those who managed to get a job earned "less than 750 euros per month - with scarce social protection, which contributes to a poverty risk rate of 20% amongst young people" (Estanque, Costa, Soeiro, 2013, p. 35). Increasingly more dependent on their families, young people were forced to leave the country looking for better opportunities, which lead to an emigration rate unparalleled since the 1960's

(Docquier & Rapoport, 2011). This 'Desperate Generation' (*Geração à Rasca*) was the main protagonist of the biggest protest since the Carnation Revolution in 1974, which put an end to the dictatorial regime and established democracy (Baumgarten, 2013); this took place in March 2011 and was the first in a series of nationwide demonstrations. Portuguese movements took part in an international wave of protests, linking national-level claims (e.g. corruption, unemployment, tax increases) with the worldwide severe economic situation and European debates about the financial crisis and the dependency of European states regarding international financial markets. In September 2012, the motto "Fuck Troika, we want our lives back" was launched in the social networks, and lead one million people to the streets in several cities throughout the country, protesting against the worsening of life conditions following more than one year of austerity. Our data collection took place in the aftermath of these large protests in Portugal, which were framed by the "global protest" wave in which online platforms, particularly social networks, played a central role (Estanque, Costa & Soeiro, 2013).

The economic crisis and the reduction in the public financing, including in education led to questioning the very role of the school as a mechanism of social equality and mobility. Education in Portugal is free and compulsory until the 12th grade, which is when students complete the secondary education. The Portuguese educational system is divided into four sequential levels: pre-primary education (optional for children from 3- to 6-year-olds), basic education with three sequential cycles, secondary education with a three-year cycle, and finally higher education. Basic education includes: the first cycle, which comprises 4 years (6- to 10-year-olds), corresponding to primary education; the second cycle encompasses 2 years (10- to 12-year-olds), corresponding to 5th and 6th grades; and the third cycle has 3 years (12- to 15-year-olds), corresponding to 7th, 8th and 9th grades. Secondary education, for 15- to 18-year-olds, takes three years and includes four types of courses: scientific-humanistic, technological, specialist artistic and vocational. Concerning private education, the country's development led to the creation of publicly-subsidized private schools in order to compensate for the lack of schools in some regions (Rosado, 2012). Private and cooperative institutions that are part of the education system comply with the same legislation as State education regarding teaching standards, curriculum, assessment and teachers' qualifications. The private schools in our sample are not encompassed by such contracts with the State, but instead are fully private. In 2015 there were 1498 private schools, of which 1120 offered basic education and 378 secondary education. Regarding public education, there were 6499 institutions with basic education (total number =

5915) and secondary education (n = 584). Private schools, contrary to public schools, require to the payment of fees. Moreover, private schools are free to select their teachers, contrary to public schools, in which teachers are allocated by the Ministry of Education following a nationwide competition. Research comparing both type of schools in Portugal – public (free) and private (paid) – indicates a positive impact of private schools on 9th grade students' performance, as private management schemes target successful results in exams and increase the likelihood of finishing mandatory schooling in a shorter period of time (Rosado, 2012). Nata, Pereira and Neves (2014), analysing the Portuguese secondary school rankings, compare the differential between the internal scores and the scores obtained in national exams by students of private and public schools. They show that private schools consistently show higher differential, thereby proving that inequalities in accessing higher education are reinforced through procedural unfairness (that is, grade inflation).

Method

In order to understand youth involvement, we seek to analyse how different socioeconomic variables that intersect family and schooling contexts relate with political knowledge and experiences.

Our chief question is: How do cultural and economic capitals – socioeconomic variables associated with different youth contexts (family and school) – relate with political literacy and patterns of civic and political participation? First, through cluster analysis, we looked at how the youngsters in our sample organised around cultural variables (parents' levels of education, educational expectations and books at home). We consider that this procedure adds consistency to the cultural capital variable, since it congregates not only the cultural capital that one holds, but also his/her cultural expectations. Then, we performed a multivariate analysis of covariance in order to explore whether and how cultural capital (held and expected), economic capital and the type of school (often and indicator of both cultural and economic capital) are related to political literacy and civic and political participation (online participation and demonstrations; and civic and lifestyle politics). Gender (female and male) and school year were introduced as covariates – as previous analyses had shown their effect on participation and literacy and we intended to control it – and the socioeconomic

variables as differentiating factors[24]. The IBM SPSS Statistics 22 software was used for data analysis.

Participants and data collection

Participants were asked to fill in the questionnaire during classes, in the researchers' presence. Schools (public and private) and students (from the 8th and 11th grades) were sampled based on convenience. We tried to ensure two criteria: a) diversity regarding the nature and development of geographical areas (urban and semi-rural); b) gender balance. The need for conjugating these criteria proved difficult, mostly due to the fact that in semi-rural areas there are very few independent, fee-paying private schools (indeed, private schools in semi-rural areas tend to be Government-dependent, publicly-subsidized).

Eleven schools located in the north and centre of Portugal (in the districts of Porto, Braga, Viseu and Coimbra) were included in the sample. A total of 732 Portuguese students (53.8 % female) from Grades 8 (47.7%, *n* = 349) and 11 (52.3%, *n* = 383) participated in the study[25]. Students from public schools: N = 358; students from private schools: N = 374. Gender distribution is balanced in the Grade 8 subsample (Female = 173; Male = 176), and less so in Grade 11, with more than half of the sample (57.5%) being females (Female = 221; Male = 162). We obtained parental approval from all participants. The average time needed for filling out the questionnaire was approximately 40 min.

The instrument is a self-report questionnaire that comprises a wide set of scales related with political and schooling dimensions. In this paper we will focus on the indicators of socioeconomic status, civic and political experiences and political literacy. Although we mobilised several dimensions already used and tested in previous studies with similar samples, the final version of the instrument was improved by the youngsters themselves, through the think aloud method: we gathered small groups of youngsters and asked them to talk aloud while filling in the questionnaire, encouraging

[24] The effects of school year were not directly taken into account in this analysis, given that previous exploratory analyses showed that both 8th and 11th grades presented a similar distribution regarding cultural and economic capital variables.

[25] Eighth grade students have been included in the sample because this is a relevant age period concerning political development (Amadeo, Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Husfeldt, & Nikolova, 2002). Like 11th grade students, they have the right to participate in political events. Actually, we have data – not analysed in this article – showing that some of the 8th grade youngsters took part in demonstrations, both along their peers (in students' demonstrations) and their families (in anti-austerity demonstrations).

them to think about the best ways to improve the intelligibility of the items[26].

Measures

Political literacy and participation

Political literacy, an important predictor of civic and political participation (Amadeo, Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Husfeldt, & Nikolova, 2002), is a competence potentially developed in socialising contexts such as the family and the school. To measure this dimension we adopted a set of questions previously used in an international study on Civic Education (Torney-Purta, Schwille, & Amadeo, 1999), in which Portugal was one of the participating countries (Menezes, 2002). Our instrument included four items of political literacy that were both easily intelligible and diverse, in order to be adequate for both 8th and 11th grades. Thus, in the four items, we asked the respondents 1) to interpret a political party's pamphlet; 2) to identify the nature of a democratic system, in opposition to a dictatorial one; 3) to identify the function of political parties in democracy; and 4) to identify processes of political corruption. Items were coded as wrong or right answers (0 = wrong answer; 1 = right answer), and were then aggregated into a final variable that gives the overall level of political literacy (1= one question right; 2 = two questions right; 3= three questions right; 4 = four questions right).

Experiences of civic and political participation during the last 12 months were explored through the adaptation of the Portuguese version of the Political Action Scale (Lyons, 2008; Menezes, Ribeiro, Fernandes-Jesus, Malafaia, & Ferreira, 2012), measuring a wide range of civic and political behaviours, including direct forms of participation, online participation and civic engagement. The youngsters rated the question "Have I done the following activities during the last 12 months?" from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very often). In this paper, experiences of civic and political participation are a two dimensional construct that results from the exploratory factor analysis: *Online participation and demonstrations* with three items (Cronbach's α = .61): "attend a public meeting or demonstration dealing with political or social issues"; "link news,

[26] During the think aloud method, 11 youngsters (aged between 14 and 23 years old) gave important suggestions, mainly regarding the clarity of the instructions and the items of the questionnaire. Based on their comments we introduced several changes concerning the standardisation of responses' scales and the way some questions were formulated, mainly in order to avoid ambiguous interpretations by the respondents. Specifically regarding the four items of political literacy, the changes were mostly rewording in order to make the discourse simpler.

music or videos with a social or political content to my contacts"; "sign an online petition". *Civic and lifestyle politics* with three items (Cronbach's α = .56): "do volunteer work"; "wear a bracelet, sign or other symbol to show support for a social or political cause"; "boycott or buy certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons". The first scale entails participation in demonstrations and in the internet, which are often quite intertwined, with the latter serving as a platform for real-world involvement (Castells, 2012); the second scale comprises activities combining a typically desirable kind of civic invo lvement – volunteering – (Serek, Petrovicová, & Macek, 2015) and the politicisation of individual choices that commonly belong to the private sphere – wearing symbols for political reasons or practicing political consumerism (Giddens, 1991).

Socioeconomic status

Economic capital is measured through the perception of financial difficulties at home. The effect of family income on political participation is widely reported, and here it is incorporated as a measure of socio-economic status (Verba et al., 1995). As it is likely that young people do not know their parents' income (Torney-Purta et al., 1999), we ask about their perception about the existence of financial problems at home (1 = never; 2 = sometimes; 3 = often).

To assess *cultural capital (held and expected)*, we created a variable that combines the parents' level of education, the number of books at home and the expected level of school attainment. We asked youngsters about the educational level of both mother and father, in a scale ranging from 1 (never attended school) to 5 (attended or finished higher education). We also included the number of books at home, since it is used as an indicator of educational level and social and economic background (Woessmann, 2005). Plus, this variable often works as a double-check of the parents' level of education, as youngsters may not know it but may estimate how many books exist at home (Torney-Purta et al., 1999; Quintelier & Hooghe, 2013). The scale response has six levels (1 = None; 2 = 1-10 books; 3 = 11-50 books; 4 = 51-100 books; 5 = 101-200 books; 6 = more than 200). Finally, we considered the expected level of school attainment (1 = Basic education; 2 = Secondary education; 3 = Vocational course; 4 = Bachelor; 4 = Master degree; 5 = PhD) as an indicator of success in formal education, which is related to political knowledge and interest (Nie et al., 1996; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980). In order to create a variable combining these three

dimensions, related with the family's cultural resources and educational expectations, in order to elaborate a more comprehensive cultural capital variable, we performed a clustering analysis, combining hierarchical clustering and k-means clustering, to classify the participants according to their cultural capital (held and expected). The four clusters solution explains about 41% variance for both the 8th and the 11th grades. The final variable has four groups:

1) Low Cultural Capital [N = 100]: youngsters' mothers attended or completed secondary (35%), basic education (34%), primary education (19%), and higher education (10%); the majority of fathers' levels of education are basic (39%) and primary education (28%), with 25% having attended or completed secondary education; 55% of these youngsters expect to achieve the secondary level of education (and 36% expect to achieve a vocational training course); 35% of respondents have between 1 and 10 books at home, 23% have between 11 and 50 and 18% between 51-100.

2) Medium-Low Cultural Capital [N = 135]: the most frequently reported mother's levels of education (attended or concluded) are basic education (40 %), followed by secondary education (36%) and primary education (17%); the same trend applies to father's level of education (primary education: 21%; basic education: 40%; secondary education: 33%); most youngsters intend to achieve the PhD level (34%), the master degree (33%) or the graduation degree (33.3%); and report having between 1 and 10 books at home (51%) or between 11 and 50 (49%).

3) Medium-High Cultural Capital [N = 67]: the mother's most frequent level of education (attained or concluded) is basic education (42%), followed by secondary education (31%) and primary education (21%); most youngsters' fathers attended or completed basic education (54%) or primary school (27%); the majority of these youngsters expect to achieve a PhD (55%), followed by the master degree (31.3%); and they have between 51 and 100 books at home (46%) or between 101 and 200 (31%).

4) High Cultural Capital [N = 430]: most of these young people's mothers have attended or completed higher education (81%), followed by secondary education (15.3%); 67% of their fathers attended or concluded higher education, followed by secondary education (28.4%); 49% of these youngsters expect to achieve a PhD level, followed by 31% who expect to obtain a master degree (31%); 47% of these youngsters have more than 200 books at home and 21% between 101-200.

Additionally, the *type of school* (1 = public; 2 = private) is considered in this paper, once it may be an indicator of family's socioeconomic status.

Results

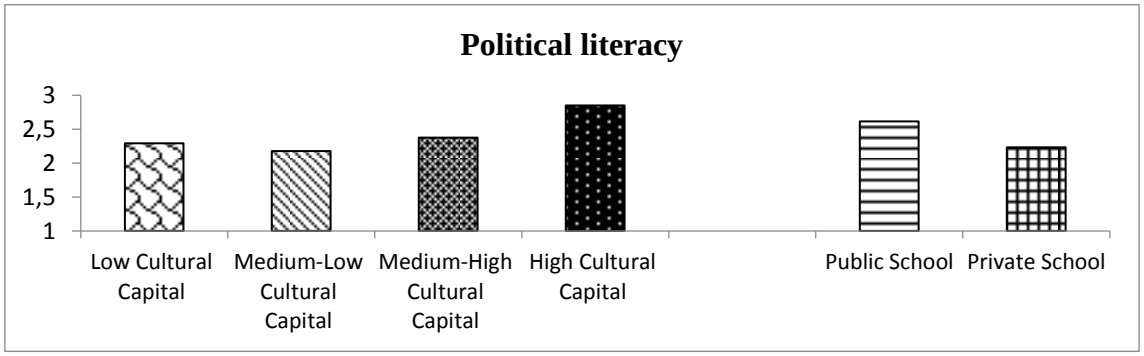
Multivariate tests reveal significant effects of cultural capital [Pillai's Trace = .046, F(9,1980) = 3.402, *p* = .000], economic capital [Pillai's Trace = .043, F(6,1318) = 4.881, *p* = .000) and type of school [Pillai's Trace = .015, F(3,658) = 3.237, *p* = .022]. The tests of between-subjects effects showed that cultural capital and the type of school have significant effects on political literacy (p = .000; p = .010, respectively), but not on participation experiences. In its turn, economic capital has a significant effect in both dimensions of civic and political participation, "online participation and demonstrations" (p = .000) and "civic and lifestyle politics" (p = .006).

Additionally, there are also significant interaction effects between cultural capital and the type of school [Pillai's Trace = .045, F(9,1980) = 3.318, *p* = .000], and also between the type of school and economic capital [Pillai's Trace = .032, F(6,1318) = 3.552, *p* = .002] in political literacy (p. = 001, p = .010) and in online participation and demonstrations (p = .006, p = .010).

The role of socioeconomic variables on political literacy

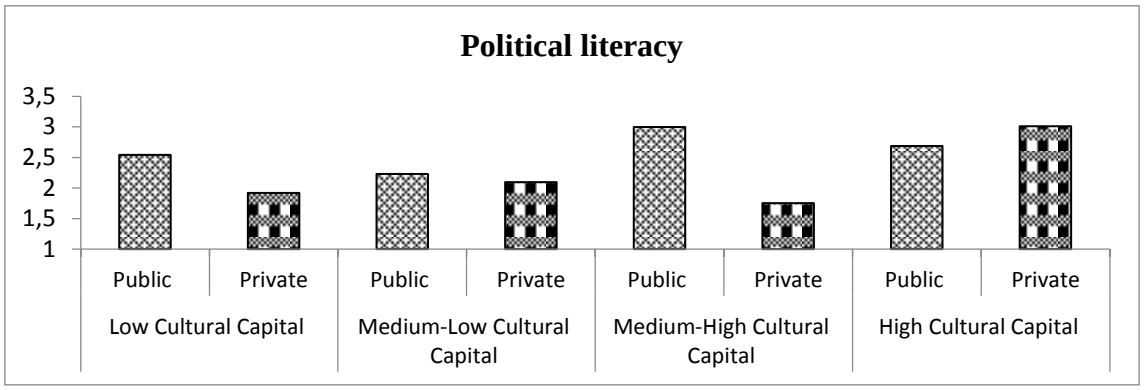
Regarding cultural capital (held and expected), pairwise comparisons show statistically significant differences in political literacy between the high cultural capital group and the groups with low (p = .003) and medium-low cultural capital (p = .000), with political literacy being higher in the group with high cultural capital (higher educated parents, more than 200 books at home and school expectations at the PhD level) as shown in Figure 1. Studying in a public or private school also has a significant effect in political literacy: students of public schools score higher on literacy (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Political literacy – effects of cultural capital and type of school



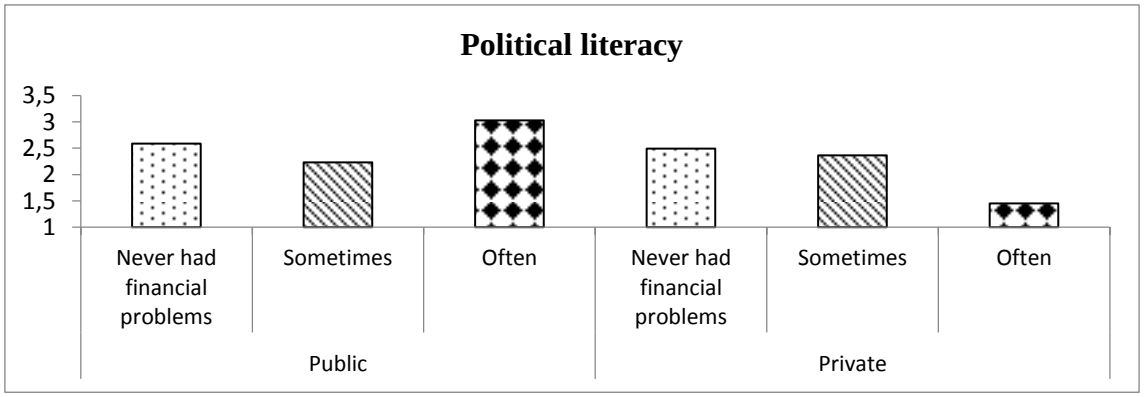
Furthermore, the results suggest that the types of school students are enrolled in present variations concerning political literacy according to cultural capital patterns: overall political literacy is higher in public schools, with the exception of students with the highest cultural capital – see Fig. 2.

Figure 2. Political literacy – interaction effects between cultural capital and type of school



Students from public and private schools also present different levels of political literacy according to their economic capital: for students from public schools, the increase in financial problems at home is related with higher levels of political literacy, while in private schools the more often students perceive the existence of financial problems, the lower their political literacy (Fig. 3).

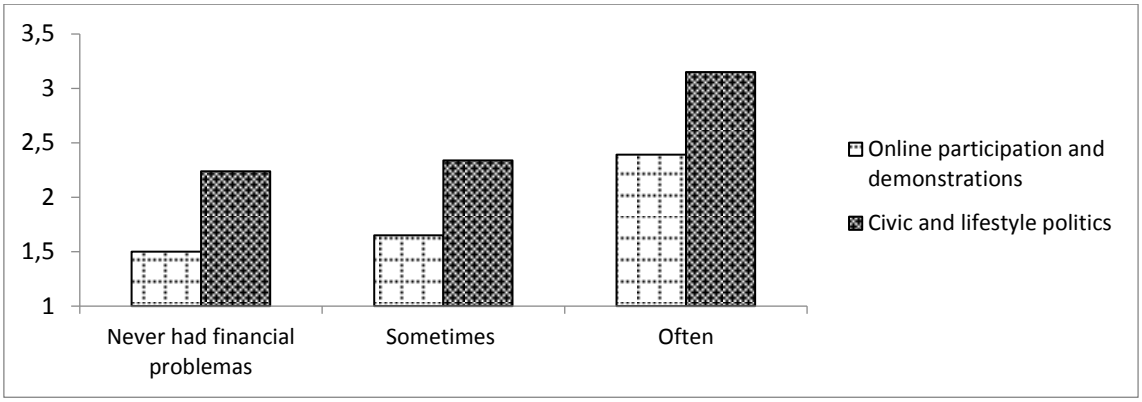
Figure 3. Political literacy – interaction effects between type of school and financial problems



The role of socioeconomic variables on civic and political participation

Economic capital is significantly related with both participatory dimensions, in the same way: the level of participation in the online sphere and in demonstrations increases with the existence of financial problems at home. The same happens regarding volunteering and lifestyle politics. The score on both dimensions stands out when students report feeling "often" the existence of financial problems at home.

Figure 4. Civic and political participation – effect of financial problems



Furthermore, regarding online participation and the involvement in demonstrations, there are interaction effects between cultural capital and type of school, and between economic capital and the type of school. Oddly, the students with high cultural capital and with low cultural capital from public schools report more experiences of e-participation and involvement in protests, while students in the intermediate levels of cultural capital (medium-low and medium-high) belonging to private schools show a higher engagement in those forms of participation (Fig. 5). Furthermore, participation through online platforms and in demonstrations appears to be induced by students' lack of economic capital – as portrayed in Figure 4 –, with higher levels of participation when feeling "often" the existence of financial problems at home (particularly for private-school students) (Fig. 6).

Figure 5. Online participation and demonstrations– interaction effects between cultural capital and type of school

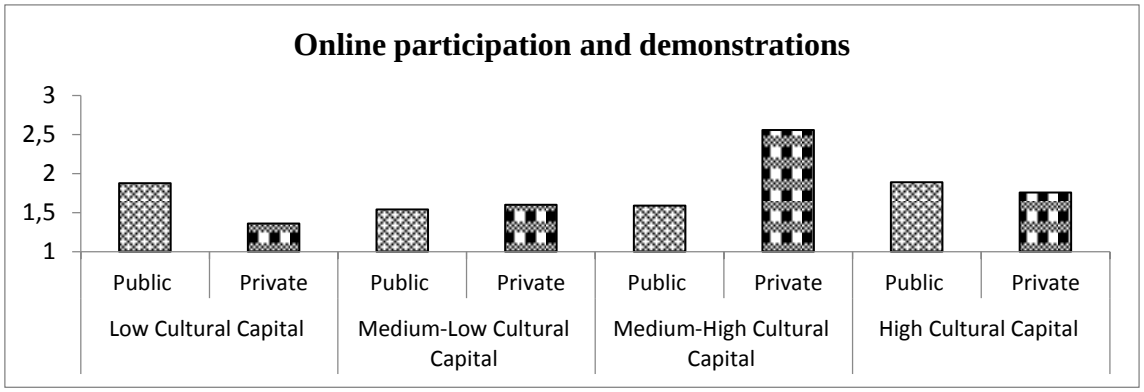
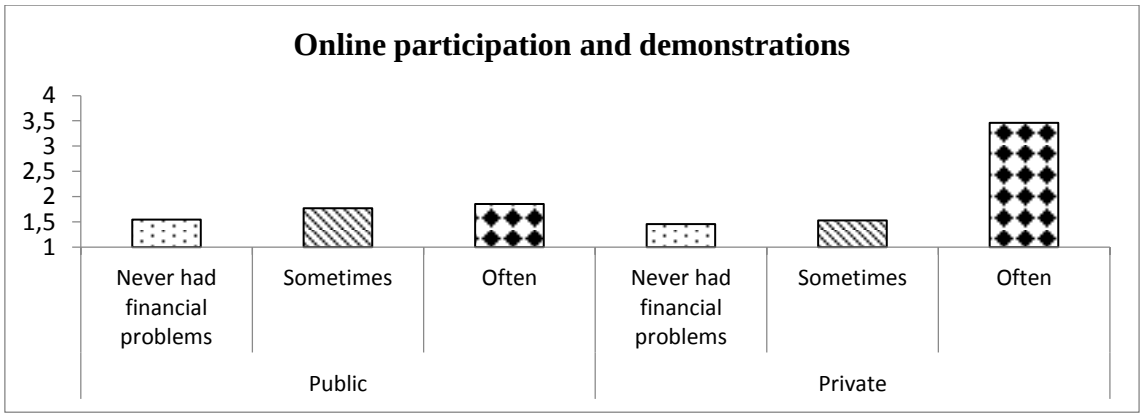


Figure 6. Online participation and demonstrations– interaction effects between type of school and financial problems



Discussion and final remarks

The results show that high cultural capital has a clear effect on political knowledge. Having highly educated parents, a wide access to information and good expectations about one's own educational progress improves the likelihood of being well-informed about political systems and the role political parties should have in a democracy, as well as the ability to interpret a political leaflet and understanding what corruption is. This result is not unexpected, considering the fact that possessing a high cultural capital typically distinguishes those who are closer to legitimised culture from those who are further away from it (Bourdieu, 2010 [1979]). However, and regarding the type of school youngsters attend, public-school students exhibit more political literacy than their private-school counterparts. Nevertheless, the interaction effect between the type

of school and cultural capital shows that this pattern of differences – political literacy scores being higher for public school students and for those with higher cultural capital – does not emerge for students who belong to a cultural elite (high cultural capital), but it clearly does for those students who have medium-high cultural capital (whose parents do not have high educational levels, but nonetheless display high expectations regarding their future educational attainment and have a relatively high number of books at home). Thus, access to political knowledge and literacy is not something necessarily linked to private schooling contexts, nor exclusive to some sort of cultural elite. In fact, a self-selection effect may be at stake here. In other words, public schools are related to higher political literacy, except regarding youngsters who already belong to a family environment characterised by a high level of cultural resources and more access to political information. The contact with plurality (different opinions and living conditions), and probably the stronger conveyance of universalist values (Dreeben, 1968) that characterises public school environments may be fostering more knowledge about democracy and the political world. In its turn, economic capital emerged as an important variable regarding experiences of civic and political participation. The students who report having financial problems at home more often participate in the online and offline realms, both through protests and individualized forms of activism. This result seems to confirm, then, that subjective perceptions of deprivation and hardship are important in mobilising for political action (Klandermans, 1997). Concerning specifically online participation and the involvement in demonstrations – currently very close spheres of participation, especially considering the socio-political moment in which we collected the data, described in section four – the lack of economic capital increases the likelihood of getting involved in this kind of participatory pattern, most notably regarding private-school students. A tentative explanation for this may be that the impact of the economic crisis is felt more intensely, at least in subjective terms, by those who were previously immune to this kind of problems. Thus, they may feel more prompted for action.

As seen in Figure 3, the levels of political literacy are very similar for students who have high economic capital, whether they are in public or in private schools. The situation is completely different with respect to students with low economic capital, with students from public schools having much higher levels of political literacy than those from private schools. While this may appear contradictory with the fact that private-school students who more frequently perceived financial problems are more prompt for action, this may be explained by the specific context in which the data were

collected. Indeed, the data gathered may refer to a short and specific time frame, in which promptness for action was not determined by a stable socioeconomic situation (including stable knowledge about the situation), but rather by sudden changes that had an impact on emotions and attitudes and promoted extreme behaviours. Although private institutions are known for being very effective in leading youngsters towards a successful educational pathway (Rosado, 2012; Nata et al., 2014), they seem less successful in terms of political education, probably avoiding an explicit politicisation of the school context.

E-participation and involvement in demonstrations seems to be the participatory pattern more significantly influenced by a complex relationship between economic and cultural capital, considering the type of schools. As discussed above, students in this cluster do not have highly-educated parents and therefore are not related to typical upper class families, but nonetheless display very high educational expectations and have a significant number of books at home. Youngsters in this cluster who study in private schools probably do so due to an extra financial effort from their parents. Therefore, and again taking into consideration the social context, the socio-political circumstances may have pushed them to engage in online discussions about the political situation and to participate in the anti-austerity demonstrations that occurred in this period as they may have felt that their high expectations were being put at risk. Another way of looking at these results, and considering that these kind of counter-intuitive effects are specifically related to the pattern of online participation and demonstrations, is that the extraordinary high levels of civic and political engagement at the time may have blurred the traditional cultural and economic capital boundaries, bringing diversity to the streets and the online forums.

Overall, the results indicate that, on the one hand, socioeconomic status continues a to be a useful device in analysing knowledge and behaviours –with political literacy being related to high levels of cultural capital; on the other hand, however, youth groups, particularly taking into consideration their schooling context, are far from homogeneous. Considering the type of school (private or public) is useful, mostly to complexify more or less established ideas such as the one that students from private schools present higher levels of political literacy than public-school students. Our results indicate the opposite: public-school students exhibit higher levels of political literacy, also when they feel financial difficulties. Moreover, regarding cultural capital, the results show that the parents' education level is not necessarily a source of cumulative disadvantage for some youngsters, as they, despite that fact, aspire to attain

high academic titles, display good political knowledge and engage in civic and political forms of participation. Finally, and regarding economic capital, the results go in line with both the classical and the recent literature on collective behaviour which suggests that contexts of crisis and socioeconomic hardship trigger protests (e.g., Marx & Engels, 1992 [1848]; Kornhauser, 2010), particularly from groups whose position is threatened and risk serious losses (Buechler, 2004).

In sum, these results suggest two final observations. Socioeconomic status is very relevant in studying political literacy and participatory experiences, as it shapes some of the expectable patterns that emerge from the data. Yet, it is the contexts (space and time – the schooling context and the moment of data collection) in which different capitals interact that render both expectable and unexpectable patterns more understandable. In other words, socioeconomic variables play an influential role in political knowledge and behaviours – whether towards a 'fatalist' condition (political literacy being related with high levels of cultural capital) or some sort of 'leverage' (lack of economic capital) being related with higher levels of political participation). That is, the type of school and the specific moment (social, political and economic) that frames youngsters' lives and experiences are fundamental in making sense of the influence that socioeconomic capitals exert in political literacy and participation, adding complexity to what could be regarded as simply fatalism or leverage.

This article challenges the literature indicating that public schools' bureaucracy and lack of resources may provide less room for the development of civic and political competences – our results prove otherwise in what regards political literacy. Further studies could focus this particular dimension, looking into the curriculum specificities of both types of schools and the activities they promote in relation to students' knowledge and behaviours. Additionally, our results contribute to a deeper understanding of the effect of cultural and economic capital in relation to the schooling context, showing that in a particularly hard (and therefore, politically effervescent) socioeconomic context, the lack of economic capital propels political involvement overall, also possibly changing previous patterns of civic and political participation and literacy.

2.5. Political cognition: *what* and *how* do youngsters think about politics?

In the next section [Article 3] we will analyse the perspectives of young people about the anti-austerity demonstrations that took place in Portugal. Knowing how this socio-political scenario is interpreted by the respondents, unveiling the information and interest they display, will enable understanding how they live and construct democratic citizenship in an environment of political, economic and social crisis.

2.5.1. **"Os Cidadãos continuam a ter direito à Democracia": Discursos de jovens estudantes sobre as manifestações anti-austeridade em Portugal**

Malafaia, Carla; Neves, Tiago & Menezes, Isabel (accepted for publication). "Os cidadãos continuam a ter direito à democracia": Discursos de jovens estudantes sobre as manifestações anti-austeridade em Portugal. *Educação, Sociedade & Culturas.*

Resumo: Nas últimas décadas, os discursos académicos e políticos sobre a cidadania dos/as jovens têm sugerido um *deficit* democrático que se caracterizaria por um afastamento face à política e à participação. No entanto, tanto a realidade quanto a investigação têm, em especial desde 2010, revelado que podemos, ao invés, estar a assistir a uma «revolução participatória» (Norris, 2002), com um forte envolvimento dos/as jovens, um pouco por todo o mundo, em movimentos sociais focados em causas mais transversais (a democracia) ou em questões específicas (a austeridade, os cortes na educação). Neste estudo, centramo-nos especificamente nas visões de jovens do ensino regular português do 8º, 11º e 2º ano do ensino superior, em escolas urbanas e semi-urbanas, sobre as manifestações anti-austeridade em Portugal que decorreram ao longo do ano de 2012. Estas manifestações levaram a uma mobilização popular quase sem precedentes desde a revolução democrática de 1974. Neste estudo, 1107 jovens responderam por escrito a um inquérito onde eram apresentadas fotos dessas manifestações. Os resultados revelam que os/as jovens não só acompanharam as manifestações e sabem quais as questões em jogo, como têm um discurso crítico e comprometido, revelador de que são ativos/as na construção e vivência da sua cidadania.
Palavras-chaves: construção da cidadania, movimentos sociais, jovens

"Citizens still have a right to democracy": young students' discourses on anti-austerity demonstrations in Portugal

Abstract: Over the past few decades, academic and political discourses on youth citizenship have pointed to the existence of a democratic deficit, characterised by an estrangement from

politics and participation. However, both reality and research have shown that, particularly since 2010, we may instead be witnessing a «participatory revolution» (Norris, 2002). Indeed, throughout the globe, youngsters are strongly involved in social movements focused either on transversal causes (such as democracy) or specific issues (such as austerity, or cuts in education). In this research we focus on the ways Portuguese youngsters, from the 8th and 11th grades and 2nd year of University, of the regular school system, both from urban and semi-urban schools, assess the 2012 anti-austerity rallies. These rallies, organised by social movements, led to an almost unprecedented popular mobilisation since the 1974 democratic revolution. 1107 youngsters answered in writing to a survey in which they were shown photos of the rallies. Results show that they not only accompanied the rallies and were aware of what was at stake, but also have a critical and engaged discourse that demonstrates that they are active in constructing and living their citizenship.
Keywords: constructing citizenship, social movements, youth

Introdução: A «crise» da participação juvenil ou a «reinvenção do ativismo político»?

O conceito de participação tem sido frequentemente analisado em relação com a juventude, tradicionalmente representada na literatura como um grupo com forte comprometimento político e generosidade ativista (e.g., Erikson, 1968). Há, paralelamente, um reconhecimento da participação social, cívica e política dos/as jovens como importante preditor da participação na vida adulta (Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002), promovendo competências relevantes em vários domínios da vida (Menezes, 2007).

Nas últimas décadas, a noção de geração tem sido mobilizada para interpretar as mudanças em curso nas sociedades ocidentais. Encontramos frequentemente a ideia de que estas mudanças se refletem fortemente nas populações juvenis (Inglehart, 1997), para quem a política se tornou algo irrelevante, e que o declínio da participação cívica e política deve ser entendido como uma mudança geracional (Putnam, 2000; Sinnott, & Lyons, 2003). Este tema tem sido amplamente debatido na academia e em instituições políticas, considerando-se que a «geração Y» é uma «geração perdida» –visão da Organização Internacional do Trabalho (Allen & Ainley, 2011) –, apolítica e apática (Henn, Weinstein & Wring, 2002), caracterizada por uma baixa participação cívica e política, pondo em causa os alicerces da democracia (Benedicto & Morán, 2002; Putnam, 2000). Principalmente nos países da Europa Ocidental, o declínio da

participação juvenil nas eleições, em partidos políticos, sindicatos e associações tem levantado preocupações sobre o desinteresse e despolitização juvenis (Augusto, 2008). Portugal é um dos países em que esta preocupação é enquadrada por uma história democrática recente e, consequentemente, por uma cultura política débil (Cruz, 1985).

Verba, Scholzman e Brady (1995) definem a participação política a partir das atividades que tentam propositadamente influenciar o Governo (regional, nacional, supranacional), a implementação de políticas e a seleção de decisores políticos. Atualmente, o conceito de participação procura, progressivamente, integrar uma multiplicidade de vivências e relações com a política, concedendo-se atenção a outras dimensões a par da participação eleitoral, como o consumo, a assinatura de petições, o envolvimento partidário e a participação em protestos (Teorell, Torcal, & Montero, 2007). Assim, as recentes teorias da participação tendem a considerar não apenas as suas diferentes formas (convencional, não-convencional, legal e ilegal) mas também a diversidade de contextos em que ocorre (desde grupos informais até comunidades políticas organizadas) (Spannring, Ogris, & Gaiser, 2008; Ekman & Amna, 2012). É, aliás, este alargamento concetual que permite desconstruir os discursos sobre a «crise da participação juvenil», reconhecendo-se que «a crise» pode ser vista como sinal simultâneo de recessão (das formas mais convencionais de participação) e expansão (das formas emergentes) (Menezes, 2007).

Nesta linha, diversas investigações apontam para a desinstitucionalização das práticas políticas juvenis e para a preferência por lógicas participativas mais horizontais (Norris, 2002; Menezes et al., 2012a). Este afastamento intencional das estruturas políticas tradicionais e as expressões de desagrado e desconfiança relativamente à participação convencional levaram investigadores/as a falar de uma «juventude ativamente desenraizada» [*actively rootless youth*] (Ødegård, 2003, cit in Berrefjord, 2005, p. 110), comprometida com novas formas de intervenção cidadã – de que seria exemplo a onda global de protestos que começou em 2011. Efetivamente, as páginas dos jornais, as notícias na televisão e as atividades nas redes sociais apontaram para o designado «protesto global» (*Courrier Internacional*, novembro de 2011), com o/a «manifestante» a ser nomeado personalidade do ano pela *Times* em 2011. Desde o início desta década, assistimos a uma onda de protestos em países como a Tunísia, o Egipto, a Grécia, Portugal, Espanha, os Estados Unidos e o Brasil, face a causas mais transversais (a democracia) ou mais específicas (a austeridade, os cortes na educação). Estes acontecimentos questionam a certidão de apatia política que tem sido atribuída aos/às jovens, que parecem agora ser protagonistas de uma «reinvenção do ativismo

político» (Norris, 2002). Ora, este estudo pretende exatamente explorar a relação que jovens estudantes do ensino básico, secundário e universitário estabelecem com este contexto de forte ativismo e crise, a partir das suas visões sobre as manifestações anti-austeridade em Portugal, para aceder à forma como vivem e interpretam a cidadania. De uma amostra total de 1107 jovens, analisámos 1028 comentários escritos que revelam posicionamentos comprometidos, enfatizam as questões essenciais na discussão sobre os protestos sociais e, consequentemente, a crise económica, o resgate financeiro e a prestação governamental. São visões juvenis sobre o presente e o futuro de Portugal, e em particular dos/as jovens portugueses.

Ser jovem na Europa contemporânea

A atual geração juvenil caracteriza-se, na Europa e em especial no Sul da Europa, pela incerteza, risco e imprevisibilidade, estando crescentemente dependente de uma «família de bem-estar» (Santos, 2011) que, a custo, tenta equilibrar as fragilidades do Estado. Vendo as suas vidas permanentemente hipotecadas à custa do desemprego, da flexibilidade e desproteção laborais, os/as jovens vivem num tempo de intensa individualização que, segundo Machado Pais (2007, p. 43) pode «gerar uma falsa consciência de libertação». Portugal, um país subprotector (Esping-Andersen, 1990), torna difícil amortecer as imprevisibilidades agravadas pelas transformações sociais, sendo que para os jovens «o terreno em que as transições têm lugar é de natureza cada vez mais labiríntica» (Pais, 2006, p. XX). A crise tem aumentado as desigualdades estruturais e limitado os sistemas de proteção social, assim como as oportunidades de participação (Champeix, 2010). Estes processos de desinstitucionalização, gerando novas relações com o risco, tornam difícil a construção de projetos a longo prazo – fenómenos que alguns sociólogos relacionam com a «modernidade tardia», o «neo-liberalismo» ou a «modernidade reflexiva» (Rose, 1989; Beck, 2005; Giddens, 1991). Tudo isto tem consequências sobre a cidadania participativa: a relação com a política tende a assumir um estilo menos estruturado e hierarquizado, mais fluido, informal e expressivo (Ekman & Amna, 2012), com tendências mais individualistas, como é o caso do consumerismo político (Harris, Wyn & Younes, 2010; Inglehart, 1997).

No entanto, apesar de Inglehart (1997) associar as transformações na participação juvenil à identificação com valores pós-materialistas – ligados a causas ambientais e de direitos humanos – numa análise dos movimentos sociais emergentes na Europa, Estanque, Costa e Soeiro (2013) argumentam que este ciclo de protesto é

profundamente marcado por questões materiais e laborais: o elevadíssimo desemprego jovem qualificado e o agravamento da injustiça social foram o mote da expressão coletiva contra as instituições políticas e a favor de uma democracia direta. Estes movimentos anti-austeridade reclamaram novas formas de democracia e participação e protestaram contra os cortes nas funções sociais do Estado (a educação, a saúde, a segurança social) e o paradoxal apoio aos sistemas financeiro e bancário. A chamada «crise da zona Euro» é uma crise económica e social profunda, em que políticos e organizações políticas tradicionais parecem ter sido incapazes de canalizar a revolta das populações. Assim, os grupos juvenis têm ativado movimentos sociais reivindicativos, com formatos inovadores (veja-se a ocupação da Puerta del Sol em Madrid), e manifestações de grande mobilização como, por exemplo, os movimentos portugueses «Geração à Rasca», em 12 de Março de 2011, ou o «Que se lixe a *Troika*[27]. Queremos as nossas vidas», a 15 de Setembro de 2012. É importante destacar que, em Portugal, além do agravamento do desemprego (OECD, 2015), da pobreza e das desigualdades sociais (Carmo & Costa, 2015), a crise gerou uma emigração sem precedentes desde a década de 1960. Se em 1960, os jovens, pouco qualificados e pobres, emigravam para fugir à pobreza e à guerra colonial, actualmente é uma geração altamente qualificada que emigra para escapar ao desemprego (Docquier & Rapoport, 2011) – com devastadores efeitos emocionais e simbólicos nas famílias que apostaram na sua qualificação. Desta forma, a par da diminuição do financiamento público da educação, o questionamento do papel potencialmente «redentor» da educação foi também uma consequência da crise e da austeridade.

Aprender e ser cidadão/ã em contexto (de crise)

A sociologia da educação tem integrado «novas formas de educação e novos contextos de aprendizagem que não se confinam à escola tradicional» (Afonso, 1992: 86). Relativamente à aprendizagem da cidadania ativa e democrática, autores clássicos e recentes sustentam que ela deve ser experimentada em contexto: apropria-se o seu significado *sendo-se* cidadão/ã; através de ações reais vai-se construindo, cognitiva e praxeologicamente, o lugar de cada um/a no mundo (Dewey, 1916; Lawy & Biesta, 2006; Biesta, 2011). No estudo dos fenómenos sociais é, portanto, fundamental considerarmos os contextos (relacionais) mais próximos, mas também a conjuntura que

[27] A *Troika* é formada pela Comissão Europeia, o Banco Central Europeu (BCE) e o Fundo Monetário Internacional (FMI). A *Troika* foi responsável por avaliar as necessidades de financiamento de Portugal, estabelecendo a ação de reestruturação económica do país e avaliando o cumprimento das condições do resgate financeiro.

os enquadra. No caso dos/as jovens, é bem conhecido o papel da escola e da família como contextos de socialização, transmitindo competências, conhecimentos e interesses na área da participação cívica e política (e.g., Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). Os *media* exercem também influência: por eles «somos informados/as sobre o que acontece nos quatros cantos do mundo, o que consequentemente nos leva a sentimentos e sensações de estarmos vivendo todos num mesmo contexto» (Beck, Henning & Vieira, 2014, p. 88). Neste sentido, é-lhes reconhecida uma espécie de «função pedagógica» (*ibidem*: 90).

Situados/as por determinadas condições sociais, económicas e políticas, e a partir de influências cruzadas, os/as jovens exercem e aprendem a cidadania em contexto(s) e pela prática real. Em 2011 e 2012, o contexto sociopolítico português foi particularmente desafiante em termos políticos e cívicos: por um lado, a implementação de medidas de austeridade conduziu ao aumento do risco de pobreza, particularmente em jovens entre os 17 e os 24 anos, com muitos/as a terem que abandonar os estudos (ITUC Report, 2012); por outro lado, assistiu-se à criação e consolidação de uma «retórica económica de *emergência nacional* e de *ausência de alternativas* de acção» (Ferreira, 2011, p. 157). Períodos como este são especialmente interessantes para a análise social, pois trazem desafios importantes aos/às cidadãos/ãs, ao modo como se (re)situam entre as narrativas que lhes chegam. Em primeiro lugar, tendo as manifestações sido fortemente motivadas por decisões políticas nacionais, Portugal foi um dos primeiros países a tomar parte no ciclo global de protestos, ganhando visibilidade por se associar a uma luta internacional contra a austeridade (Baumgarten, 2013). Em segundo lugar, somos um país com baixos níveis de crença na eficácia da participação e nas instituições políticas (Pinto et al., 2012). Já em 2008, um estudo de Magalhães e Sanz Moral mostrava que os/as jovens portugueses/as (15 - 29 anos) revelavam insatisfação com a democracia e baixos níveis de conhecimento político. Simultaneamente, contudo, expressavam-se favoravelmente à necessidade de reformas profundas na sociedade portuguesa e à criação de estruturas que introduzissem democracia direta (*ibid*.). Estas são tendências transversais a jovens de outras partes do globo (Forbrig, 2005).

Aceder às perspetivas juvenis sobre um fenómeno politicamente marcante, enquadrado numa contestação do *status quo* global, significa necessariamente compreender como a cidadania está a ser integrada e vivida. Em última análise, trata-se de aceder a mundivisões, a perspetivas sobre um fenómeno com impacto alargado e sem precedentes no percurso de vida destes/as jovens. É, portanto, incontornável

auscultarmos o conhecimento e interesse juvenis sobre este contexto. Tendo diferentes relações com o fenómeno (participação direta nas manifestações ou não) e estando diferentemente situados/as no espaço social (*backgrounds* socioeconómicos diversos), o que têm os/as jovens a dizer sobre ele? De que modo se apropriam da «coisa política»? Tomando as palavras de Bourdieu (2010 [1979], p. 478), falamos do sentimento de se «estar legitimado para se ocupar da política, de ter autoridade para falar politicamente das coisas políticas». Ou, como diz Machado Pais (2005, p. 53), é crucial «tomar-se o conceito de *cidadania* como uma ideia virada para o futuro, tendo em conta a realidade do presente». E o presente exige que se atente às perceções sobre as condições materiais e simbólicas que permitem aos/às jovens desenhar os seus trajetos e decidir sobre as suas vidas. São estas condições que confluem na continuada negociação do que é ser cidadão/ã.

Método

Participantes

Os/as participantes são estudantes do 8º ano (*n* = 349 [176 rapazes e 173 raparigas]), do 11º ano (*n* = 383 [162 rapazes e 221 raparigas]) e do 2º ano do ensino superior (*n* = 375 [89 rapazes e 286 raparigas]) num total de 1107 jovens[28]. Os questionários foram administrados em escolas públicas e privadas do Porto, Vila Real, Viseu e Coimbra[29]. A escolha das escolas obedeceu a critérios específicos (público e privado, urbana e semi-urbana), e dentro de cada escola a amostra foi de conveniência. A escolha destes anos de escolaridade visou evitar possíveis variações ligadas aos processos de transição que envolvem os primeiros e últimos anos de um ciclo de estudos. Esta faixa etária segue a linha de outros estudos (Menezes et al., 2012a; Torney-Purta, 2001), de modo a considerar-se as mudanças no desenvolvimento político ao longo da adolescência e as diferenças em termos de cidadania e participação relacionadas com a idade de voto. Os/as participantes preencheram o questionário em sala de aula, durante aproximadamente 40 minutos. A participação dos/as estudantes menores esteve dependente da apresentação prévia do consentimento parental.

[29] Consideramos que a diversificação da amostra, relacionada com o género, a localização geográfica e o tipo de escola, é importante para abranger perspetivas e experiências diversas. A exploração destas várias dimensões será considerada noutros trabalhos; neste artigo, concentrar-nos-emos apenas nas variações em função do ano de escolaridade.

Procedimento de recolha de dados

O instrumento utilizado nesta pesquisa é um questionário de auto-relato com escalas sobre dimensões políticas e académicas, validadas com populações semelhantes à do nosso estudo. Uma dessas dimensões é a cognição política, que incluiu a questão de resposta aberta analisada neste artigo. Nela pede-se ao/à respondente que se pronuncie acerca de duas imagens alusivas a manifestações ocorridas em Portugal. Uma delas mostra manifestantes com cartazes, destacando-se um que apela ao protesto («*Keep calm and protest*»[30]); a outra exibe uma manifestação de carácter mais organizado, identificando o seu mote através da faixa: «*Que se lixe a Troika. Queremos as nossas vidas*»[31] (Figura 1). Estas manifestações iniciaram-se nas redes sociais, que foram fundamentais para uma mobilização que transitou do online para o offline, criando um «espaço público híbrido» (Castells, 2012). Ocorreram manifestações de rua em 30 cidades portuguesas, que contaram, aproximadamente, com um milhão de pessoas. A fase da recolha de dados aconteceu no rescaldo desta onda de protestos e num contexto sociopolítico particular (a iminência da demissão do Governo e eleições antecipadas).

Procedimentos de análise

A análise de conteúdo dos comentários escritos foi eminentemente indutiva. Emergiram desta análise três temas organizadores: «Perspetivas sobre as manifestações»; «Crítica do Governo e da *Troika*» e «Reflexões sobre o estatuto e condição da democracia». Estes temas gerais integram no seu interior 9 categorias que revelam diferentes modos de posicionamento sobre o cenário sociopolítico,

[30] Indignados em frente à Câmara do Porto. Fonte: Global Voices (https://pt.globalvoices.org/2011/10/17/portugal-15opt-fotos-videos/). Foto da organização do 15 de Outubro (usada com permissão).

[31] Manifestação anti-austeridade Que Se Lixe a *Troika*. Porto. Fonte: "Precários Inflexíveis" (precarios.net). Foto de Paulo Pimenta/ Público (usada com permissão).

particularmente sobre as manifestações (seu significado, natureza e legitimidade). Estas serão descritas ao longo da apresentação dos resultados.

Adicionalmente, para testar a confiabilidade da análise de conteúdo, esta foi submetida a um acordo intra e inter-observadores, de forma a medir o seu grau de concordância (Brennan & Silman, 1992). Para verificar a concordância inter-observadores foi usado o teste *kappa* (Cohen, 1960) calculado no SPSS. Assim, 15% do total de texto analisado (ou seja, do total de unidades de registo existentes), foi submetido a análise de conteúdo por um investigador independente (Lima, 2013). De acordo com a interpretação sugerida por Brennan e Silman (1992) para os valores de *kappa*, o sistema de categorias construído provou ser confiável (*kappa* = .72; *p* = .000), revelando um «Bom» grau de acordo, comprovando assim a consistência da nossa análise de conteúdo.

Apresentação dos resultados

Primeiramente, apresentamos a distribuição das unidades de registo pelos temas e categorias que emergiram da análise, por anos de escolaridade. Dos/as 1107 jovens, alguns/as não responderam à questão, ainda que tenham sido em baixo número considerando o total da amostra (8º ano: *n* = 15; 11º ano: *n* = 27; 2º ano: *n* = 37).

A Tabela 1 permite mapear as tendências discursivas dos/as 1028 respondentes. Posteriormente, apresentaremos detalhadamente o conteúdo de cada uma das categorias.

TABELA 1

Percentagem de unidades de registo codificadas, por anos de escolaridade

		8ª ano	**11º ano**	**2º ano (Univ.)**
1. PERSPECTIVAS SOBRE AS MANIFESTAÇÕES	1.1. Identificação das manifestações como oportunidades de expressão e luta	24.2%	38.2%	31.4%
	1.2. Identificação das manifestações como prejudiciais ao bem-comum	3.2%	1.4%	2.1%

	1.3. Identificação das manifestações como ineficazes	3.7%	4%	1.7%
2. CRÍTICA DO GOVERNO E DA *TROIKA*	2.1. Identificação da atuação do Governo como causa da insatisfação popular	44.7%	35.5%	25.9%
	2.2. Identificação da interferência externa na governação como causa da insatisfação popular	14.7%	8.9%	6.4%
	2.3. Identificação de problemas específicos (económicos, laborais e materiais) como causas da insatisfação popular	18.6%	8.9%	7.4%
3. REFLEXÃO SOBRE O ESTATUTO E CONDIÇÃO DA DEMOCRACIA	3.1. Identificação do fenómeno da participação ilegítima	1.2%	0.5%	0.3%
	3.2. Identificação do fenómeno da participação alienada	1.2%	4%	2.7%
	3.3. Identificação do fenómeno da responsabilização individual	2.3%	2.1%	2.4%

As categorias 1.1 e 2.1 são as mais frequentes. Este resultado não é surpreendente, considerando as imagens apresentadas e o contexto de produção destes discursos. Ainda assim, é interessante verificar que este tipo de reivindicações na expressão e luta por direitos e mudança social é sobretudo enfatizado pelos/as jovens do 11º ano. Curiosamente, são os/as estudantes do 8º ano que mais criticam o Governo e a *Troika*,

considerando-os responsáveis pelo agravamento das condições de vida da população. São também estes/as que mais identificam problemas concretos associados a este período (aumento de impostos e desemprego, cortes nos salários e nos serviços públicos, etc.).

As categorias correspondentes ao terceiro tema são quantitativamente menos expressivas. No entanto, revelam concepções importantes sobre a participação cívica e política. Primeiramente, emerge a ideia da ilegitimidade dos protestos porque o Governo é eleito pelo voto popular e, por isso, não deve ser contestado, considerando-se também que a maioria das pessoas que participa em manifestações não vota. Estas posições, baseadas numa visão redutora da participação, são mais frequentes nos/as estudantes do 8º ano. Em segundo lugar, a ideia de que as manifestações reflectem uma participação alienada, desinformada e sem aderência à realidade, é sobretudo partilhada pelos/as jovens do 11º ano. Por último, surge o argumento de que cada pessoa deve assumir responsabilidade pela crise económica, mais enfatizado pelos/as jovens do ensino superior.

Apresentamos seguidamente o conteúdo de cada uma das categorias.

Perspetivas sobre as manifestações

A grande maioria dos/as jovens inclui nos seus comentários a *identificação das manifestações como oportunidades de expressão e luta*. Reconhecem, portanto, a importância desta forma de reivindicação como ferramenta de mudança, visando melhorar a situação vivida pela população portuguesa. Uma jovem do 8º ano sublinha a importância desta forma de participação na defesa de direitos e na chamada de atenção dos decisores políticos. Identifica os protestos como um modo de reação popular à falta de responsividade governamental, acrescentando que participa em manifestações deste tipo com a sua família.

> Eu acho que as pessoas devem fazer manifestações (…) são a única maneira de sermos ouvidos pelos Governo, de chamar a atenção dos políticos, para que estes saibam quais as consequências das decisões que tomam, muitas vezes sem o consenso da população. Eu costumo ir sempre com a minha família porque achamos que se ficarmos em casa a lamentarmo-nos nada vai mudar, por isso temos mesmo que ir para a rua e defender os nossos direitos. (8º ano)

Enfatizando as consequências emocionais e materiais da crise, um jovem do 11º ano sublinha «a necessidade de ir para as ruas lutar», alertando para o empobrecimento das condições de agência sobre o futuro.

> É um cansaço tal que faz milhões irem para as ruas por terem atingido o limite máximo. (…) o povo está desesperado com a crise que se está a passar e têm a necessidade de ir para as ruas lutar pelos seus direitos. Os principais protagonistas destas manifestações são jovens que se veem cada vez mais restringidos da livre escolha do seu futuro. (11º ano)

Os discursos juvenis expressam claramente a noção de que as condições de vida da população portuguesa são graves e de que se chegou a um limite insustentável, de que são prova estas manifestações. Além disso, os/as jovens sabem que outros países estão a sentir os mesmos problemas, mostrando conhecimento de que este é um fenómeno alargado:

> Isto é a democracia, é a liberdade do povo em expressar o que lhe vai na alma, o sofrimento e insustentabilidade do país que mudou a vida dos portugueses e de muitos povos do estrangeiro. (2º ano)

O tema das manifestações revelou-se, no entanto, controverso para alguns/as jovens, que expressaram uma visão negativa acerca desta forma de participação, identificando *as manifestações como prejudiciais ao bem comum.* Estas opiniões tendem a associá-las a cenários de violência, confusão e destruição do espaço público.

> (…) decidem organizar uma manifestação, provocando problemas no tráfego e organização da cidade. [o povo] tem toda a razão, apenas perdendo-a aquando de atos ilegais, como atirar pedras, etc. (8º ano)

Além da violência e desunião social associados aos protestos, considera-se que eles acabam por agravar as condições económicas do país por interferirem com o ritmo laboral.

> As manifestações param o país, o que causa despesas e provoca o aumento de impostos. (…) A imagem da direita sugere uma manifestação violenta onde as pessoas estão iradas com a situação a que se opõem, tendo intenção de se revoltarem e destruírem o espaço público. (11º ano)

> Não concordo com manifestações deste tipo, penso que só promovem a desunião dos portugueses, a revolta geral e um forte desequilíbrio social (…). (2º ano)

Em alguns casos, os comentários a favor e contra estes protestos são complementados com a *identificação da ineficácia das manifestações*. Segundo alguns/as participantes,

independentemente da sua legitimidade, na maioria das vezes as manifestações não produzem efeitos reais. Neste sentido, o balanço entre custos e benefícios desta forma de participação torna-a irrelevante, já que «as manifestações não levam a lado nenhum (...) não valem de nada, pois a rede está montada» (2º ano do ensino superior). Mesmo quando aos protestos subjazem motivações consideradas válidas, questiona-se: «Mas de que servem? O Governo está-se marimbando para isso» (8º ano). Por outras palavras, os/as jovens recordam que «nenhuma lei ou condição será alterada com estes protestos (…) São raros os que conseguem criar um impacto significativo nas decisões políticas» (11º ano). A perceção de baixa eficácia política externa está, então, na origem desta crença na ineficácia das manifestações.

Crítica do Governo e da Troika

Como seria esperado, tendo em conta as imagens apresentadas, a crítica do Governo e da Troika é um tópico que marca significativamente os discursos juvenis.

A *identificação do Governo como causa da insatisfação popular* é uma categoria que reúne várias características que os/as jovens atribuem ao Governo português. A falta de eficiência e seriedade, a má gestão, a corrupção e fraca responsividade, bem como a falta de ligação das políticas à realidade social são alguns dos elementos que estão na base da crítica ao Governo, justificando nalguns casos o apelo à sua demissão.

> [os manifestantes] pretendem um Governo menos corrupto e que pense no povo e com o povo (…) é urgente que o Governo mude, pois ele é que está a fazer com que o país se afunde mais. (8º ano)

> Só sabem dizer que temos que ter mais austeridade e fazer alguma coisa benéfica não fazem, mas infelizmente é a treta do Governo que temos. (...) Governo Rua!!! (11º ano)

> Estas imagens dão conta da indignação de um povo de um país (Portugal) que está revoltado com a conjuntura económica atual, ou seja, a população está revoltada com as medidas tomadas pelo Governo, dado que parece que não têm levado em consideração as reais necessidades das pessoas. (2º ano)

O agravamento das condições de vida da população é atribuído ao alinhamento das decisões governamentais com a *Troika*. Assim, os/as jovens identificam *a interferência externa na governação como causa da insatisfação popular*. Um jovem do 8º ano é contundente ao afirmar que o país está pior desde a chegada da *Troika* a Portugal.

> As imagens dizem-me que este país está cada vez pior. Como se diz, «Que se lixe a *Troika*», não precisamos deles para nada e o povo unido jamais será vencido. (…) a *Troika* está a estragar este país nos cortes que estão a fazer. (8º ano)

Os/as estudantes do 11º ano e do 2º ano do ensino superior também associam a *Troika* a cortes financeiros, com sérias consequências para vários segmentos da população. Ela é identificada como elemento nocivo de controlo social.

> As pessoas estão contra a *Troika* e protestam para ela deixar de controlar a vida do povo, pois ela no final não vai ajudar os cidadãos, mas trazer-lhes mais problemas e mais impostos para pagar (…) cortam nos orçamentos e tiram dinheiro das reformas. (11º ano)

> A *Troika* é em grande parte os culpados da crise económica, que está na origem de uma crise social, com muitas pessoas desempregadas e em risco de exclusão social. (2º ano)

As críticas ao Governo e à *Troika* são recorrentemente compostas por referências à crise económica e ao modo como as medidas políticas afetam a vida da população. Porém, alguns comentários identificam *problemas específicos (económicos, laborais e materiais) como causas da insatisfação popular*. Os cortes nos subsídios e em serviços básicos (como a saúde e a educação), o aumento de impostos diretos e indiretos, o crescimento do desemprego juvenil são algumas das questões enfatizadas pelos/as jovens dos três ciclos de estudo, que expressam enfaticamente a sua indignação perante a progressiva debilidade das condições de vida da população portuguesa e o agravamento da desigualdade e injustiça sociais, com as classes baixas a serem particularmente prejudicadas.

> O Governo faz muitos cortes na despesa e retira o subsídio de natal, de férias e de desemprego aos menos afortunados. Os impostos sobem, tal como a gasolina, o gasóleo, a luz, a água e até os produtos alimentares. (8º ano)

> Somos frequentemente bombardeados com o aumento do desemprego, cortes nos salários, na saúde. Parece que estamos a entrar num limite que não pode ser ultrapassado (…) Roubam aos pobres para dar aos ricos. Assim não pode ser! É inadmissível! (11º ano)

> O desemprego atingiu níveis recordes, obrigando jovens portugueses a emigrarem para tentarem conseguir viver os seus sonhos e ter estabilidade profissional e financeira. (...) Os ricos cada vez mais ricos e os pobres cada vez mais pobres... Queria ver políticos com ordenados de 500€ por mês, aí veriam como é. (2º ano)

Reflexão sobre o estatuto e condição da democracia

Este último tema relaciona-se com: a) a perceção de que a participação em manifestações deve estar dependente do exercício do voto; b) a opinião sobre as manifestações como modos de envolvimento alienados ou pouco refletidos; c) a expressão de argumentos ligados à responsabilização individual relativamente à crise económica.

A categoria «*identificação do fenómeno da participação ilegítima*» diz respeito aos discursos que não atribuem legitimidade democrática às manifestações, por se considerar que quem nelas participa não votou ou votou em branco.

> (...) muitas das pessoas que tomam parte neste tipo de protestos não exerceram o direito de voto em época de eleição, o que, a meu ver, descredibiliza por completo a sua vontade de contrariar e maldizer as medidas tomadas pelo Governo. (11º ano)

Além disso, e mobilizando novamente o argumento do voto como forma legítima e institucional de participação, alguns/as jovens consideram que se deve aceitar o estado das coisas uma vez que o Governo é eleito democraticamente e, como tal, as medidas políticas subsequentes devem ser respeitadas.

> (…) há pessoas que votaram no partido que neste momento tem controlo do nosso país, e viram-se contra ele em manifestações, queixam-se. Acho que devem estar caladas, pois toda a gente vota, se um ganha tem que se ter paciência, vivemos numa democracia. (8º ano)

Alguns/as jovens consideram que as manifestações são sintomáticas da apatia dos/as cidadãos/ãs, que utilizam os protestos como último recurso quando se veem diretamente afetados/as, social e economicamente.

> Infelizmente, [as imagens] acabam por me remeter para a preguiça de alguns cidadãos que acabam por se preocupar só mesmo quando os problemas chegam a eles. (2º ano)

Os discursos que apresentam a participação nas manifestações como uma mobilização sem motivos concretos e baseada em falta de informação foram codificados como dizendo respeito à *identificação do fenómeno da participação alienada*. Alguns/as jovens descredibilizam convictamente estes protestos, não lhes reconhecendo seriedade, comprometimento nem responsabilidade.

> Na minha opinião estas imagens demonstram manifestações, em que as pessoas que nelas participam são/estão pouco informadas sobre a economia e a política (…) manifestações, no

> mínimo, ridículas, visto que [os manifestantes] falam de assuntos dos quais não entendem minimamente, como se pode observar na segunda imagem. (11º ano)
>
> Completo erro social, não fazem a mínima do que estão a fazer/falar. (...) Caímos no ridículo quando grande parte das pessoas que se manifesta, fazendo-o por 'ser fixe', não percebe o que está em causa. (2º ano)

A *identificação do fenómeno da responsabilização individual* é a categoria que reúne os discursos que tendem a sublinhar o papel que cada cidadão/ã tem, ou deveria ter, na resolução da crise económica. Nesta perspetiva, cada indivíduo deve responsabilizar-se pela crise e contribuir na sua resolução.

> Honestamente, oponho-me à maneira como as pessoas se têm exprimido. Compreendo o seu descontentamento, mas acho que antes de julgar ou criticar devemos olhar para nós mesmos. A democracia baseia-se na opinião pública, logo os nossos representantes e as consequências que eles causam são nossa responsabilidade. Todos fomos responsáveis pela situação do país e cabe a todos reverter a situação. (8º ano)

A falta de consciência financeira da maioria da população – considerada a principal culpada pela crise, pois não soube controlar apropriadamente seus gastos – é sublinhada em discursos que a enquadram num suposto 'modo português de ser', com pouca capacidade de trabalho, de colaboração e de responsabilização.

> O povo gosta de culpar os outros quando quem andou a viver à grande e à francesa fomos todos nós. (…) a nossa sociedade não está mentalizada para trabalhar num contexto de crise e culpam o Governo e os partidos políticos dessa mentalidade inapropriada. (…) poderia haver uma maior colaboração dos jovens para que isto mude. Juntarmo-nos mais e unirmo-nos até ao fim para ultrapassarmos esta fase. (11º ano)

Além disto, acrescenta-se que outros países estão a passar por uma crise económica similar e que os/as portugueses/as devem demonstrar mais empenho e esforço para transformar a situação que vivem:

> Falta de interesse e coragem e compreensão da população para enfrentar todos estes problemas económicos e financeiros que não só Portugal, mas todos os países em dificuldade, estão a passar. (2º ano)

Discussão dos resultados e últimas considerações

«O conhecimento do mundo faz-se de palavras» (Pais, 2005, p. 53) e as que aqui ganham protagonismo afastam clamores sobre a indiferença juvenil perante a cena política. Os resultados mostram jovens que se interessam, se posicionam e estão longe da alienação e da apatia (Norris, 2002; Berrefjord, 2005). Pelo contrário, revelam compreender o que está em causa no momento político das manifestações anti-austeridade.

Um jornal português, dando conta da elevada abstenção eleitoral juvenil nas últimas presidenciais (Janeiro de 2016), alertava para o risco de «irrelevância política» dos/as jovens, que parecem estar a desistir da política[32]. Por outras palavras, os elevados níveis de abstenção estão a contribuir para o afastamento das preocupações juvenis da agenda política partidária – agravando o fosso entre os grupos juvenis e a classe partidária. As perspectivas juvenis sobre as manifestações permitem aceder a uma visão mais completa deste quadro. Os resultados mostraram que os/as jovens estão informados/as e implicados/as no contexto político a que pertencem, demonstrando conhecer a situação social e política do país, mesmo tendo apenas 13/14 anos, como é o caso de estudantes do 8º ano. Os discursos mostram inequivocamente a importância atribuída às manifestações sociais e a crescente desconfiança relativamente ao Governo. Os/as jovens referem a desconexão entre a classe política partidária e as preocupações da população, acusando os decisores políticos de encararem com trivialidade as expressões de desagrado popular, de que são exemplo as manifestações. A descrença relativamente aos efeitos políticos das manifestações resulta então desta crítica à surdez da política institucionalizada relativamente às preocupações populares (Norris, 2002; Menezes et al., 2012a).

Os discursos revelam conhecimento sobre o contexto sociopolítico e, cumulativamente, o modo como as representações individuais se relacionam com as macro-narrativas políticas que compõem este contexto. Neste sentido, a cognição política cumpre o papel de interface entre as dimensões individuais e coletivas da política (Van Dijk, 2002). As referências ao papel de cada pessoa na crise económica e social (bem como na sua superação) e a sobrevalorização do voto como argumento que estreita as margens da participação cívica e política apontam para o importante papel

[32] «Os jovens estão a desistir da política, e a política parece prescindir deles». Jornal Público (Janeiro de 2016): https://www.publico.pt/politica/noticia/os-jovens-estao-a-desistir-da-politica-e-a-politica-parece-prescindir-deles-1721887?page=-1

que os *media* desempenham no modo como os/as jovens olham o mundo (Beck et al., 2014). Isto são temas integrantes das narrativas inculcadas pelos partidos do Governo e que circulam abundantemente nos *media*. Estas narrativas do «não há alternativa» ou «fazer mais com menos» tornaram-se o discurso dominante da ideologia austeritária que tem governado a Europa. Os *media* têm desempenhado um papel fundamental na naturalização destes discursos, veiculando a ideia da inevitabilidade da austeridade.

Ainda assim, os discursos analisados mostram que os/as jovens são muito mais do que recetores/as passivos/as, e que a experiência vivida, definida pelo contacto com a realidade próxima (da escola, da família, da cidade), parece determinar a perceção sobre oportunidades de vida presentes e futuras (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007), resultando em visões inconformadas, que não alinham em agendas político-mediáticas. Neste sentido, a insegurança ontológica que marca a suas vidas (a perspectiva de emigração, os níveis de desemprego a instabilidade económica), parece estruturar uma consciência política reivindicativa. O conceito de modernidade líquida (Bauman, 2000) abriga estas visões juvenis fortemente marcadas pela fluidez e desregulamentação que envolvem as esferas laboral e material. O modo contundente como os/as jovens se referem, por exemplo, aos cortes nos serviços públicos e ao desemprego juvenil, incluindo-se simultaneamente como agentes ativos na mudança, torna clara a sua implicação no cenário sobre o qual produzem discurso («*temos* mesmo que ir para a rua e defender os *nossos* direitos», como dizia uma estudante do 8º ano). Estes posicionamentos, de negação da imutabilidade do *status quo*, remetem-nos para as dimensões da agência e da injustiça como componentes fulcrais da ação coletiva (Gamson, 1992).

O facto de os/as jovens do ensino superior terem mais escolaridade e experiências distintas – particularmente dos grupos do 8º ano – pode, eventualmente, explicar o facto de serem os/as que menos consideram as manifestações como ineficazes. Contudo, tecem também menos críticas ao Governo e à Troika e tendem a considerar a crise como uma questão de responsabilidade individual. Simultaneamente, os resultados mostram que os/as jovens de 14/15 anos se expressam mais, e com mais detalhe, relativamente a estas questões. São, de facto, atores políticos emergentes que devem ser tidos em conta, na medida em que vivem e conceptualizam a cidadania para além da referência à maioridade (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Numa fase tão relevante do desenvolvimento e formação (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996), a escola assume-se como contexto fundamental de socialização política juvenil. Assim, estes resultados trazem contributos importantes para a instituição escolar se repensar enquanto contexto de criação intencional de espaços e tempos para a discussão política, considerando a evidente

disponibilidade dos/as jovens nesse sentido, nomeadamente durante a adolescência. O confronto entre diferentes pontos de vista, o acesso a mais informação (e sua avaliação crítica), bem como a ligação entre as experiências e conhecimentos adquiridos fora da escola são elementos que podem ser promovidos e enquadrados pela instituição escolar. Num momento em que a política é um assunto efervescente, o evitamento da politização do espaço escolar é desadequado.

Os/as jovens portugueses/as mostram-se activos/as na reivindicação do direito a serem ouvidos/as e na demanda de condições sociais e económicas que permitam projectos de vida sustentáveis e previsíveis. A noção de cidadania patente nos seus discursos revela aprendizagens importantes de responsabilização e de relação com os outros; aquilo a que Delanty (2003) chamaria de cidadania cultural, convocando esta dimensão contextual e relacional da cidadania. Uma conjuntura económica, social e política particularmente exigente traça o contexto no qual os/as jovens (dentro e fora da escola) integram o processo de aprendizagem da cidadania democrática. Considerando-se as faixas etárias envolvidas neste estudo, os resultados mostraram que estes/as jovens/as revelam grande conhecimento e compreensão do mundo, bem como uma atitude crítica relativamente ao que (lhes) acontece. São cidadãos/ãs, ativos/as que, em vários casos, demostram um pensamento político sofisticado. Vale a pena reconhecer que há diferentes modos de participar cívica e politicamente, e que a falta de envolvimento em processos políticos convencionais pode significar uma tomada de posição consciente e de contestação.

2.5.2. How do youngsters talk about politics in their discourses on anti-austerity demonstrations?

When we began the analysis of young people's comments, we soon realized that such comments have significant variations in their content (as discussed above in Article 3) but also regarding their complexity, exhibiting different personal stances regarding the Portuguese socio-political scenario, particularly about the demonstrations – their meaning, nature, and legitimacy. Therefore, it became clear that we should pursue an analytical procedure as data sensitive as possible, in order to grasp the complexity of personal conceptions about the political and social reality, including the self-perception of being part of the scenario under analysis. Thus, we elaborated an analytical framework that covers two levels of analysis, shedding light both on *what* and on *how* young people think about politics. Hence, along with the 9 content categories[33] that emerged from our analysis, we also created a model of discursive complexity. This model fits the content categories – *what* young people think about politics –presented previously. Specifically, this model of discursive complexity was developed based on two articulated dimensions: the levels of complexity and the personal engagement shown in the respondents' discourses. Therefore, the discourses codified in each content category are organised in 5 cumulative levels of complexity ranging from the simple identification of the phenomenon (level 1), identification followed by an analysis of the phenomenon (level 2) or an analysis that goes beyond the phenomenon itself (level 4); in their turn, the intermediate levels (3 and 5) are related with the individual's engagement on the political and social phenomena under analysis – they do not add complexity to the previous levels, but rather a sense of 'we-ness'.

In the operationalization of this framework, the content and the complexity levels of analysis were integrated so that the textual units were codified simultaneously in both. We believe that this approach is more rigorous, complete and data-sensitive. For instance, when applied to the first content category (1.1.), on the 'Importance of demonstrations as opportunities for expression and fight for rights and social change' (from the major theme 1 ['Perspectives about demonstrations']), the complexity model resulted in the following sub-categories:

[33] As elaborated in the article presented previously, these 9 content categories are integrated in three major themes: 'Perspectives about demonstrations'; 'Critique of the Government and the Troika' and 'Reflection about the status/condition of democracy'.

1.1.1 Identification of protests as opportunities for expression and fight

1.1.2. Identification of protests as opportunities for expression and fight, followed by an analysis of the phenomenon

1.1.3. Identification of protests as opportunities for expression and fight, followed by an analysis of the phenomenon, and personal engagement

1.1.4. Identification of protests as opportunities for expression and fight, followed by an analysis that goes beyond the phenomenon

1.1.5. Identification of protests as opportunities for expression and fight, followed by an analysis that goes beyond the phenomenon, and personal engagement

Taking the first content category as an example, we show in the next table how some excerpts on the importance of demonstrations were categorised according to their level of complexity.

Table 3 – Example of the operationalization of the political cognition framework

LEVELS OF COMPLEXITY	CONTENT CATEGORY 1.1: The Importance of Demonstrations as Opportunities for Expression and Fight for Rights and Social Change
LEVEL 1. (Simple identification of the phenomenon)	"*The images are about a protest against the measures that politicians impose, creating difficulties for the Portuguese people*" (8th grade) "The images suggest that *people should fight for their rights*" (11th grade) "*People using the protests to get heard*" (2nd year)
LEVEL 2. (Identification followed by an analysis of the phenomenon)	"These protests were organised by citizens who are unsatisfied with their country's politics. Citizens try to get their lives back. Due to the crisis that hit the country, rigorous and drastic measures were taken. Unsatisfied with these decisions and their consequences, citizens fight for the State to solve this situation." (8th grade) "*The main protagonists of these demonstrations are young people who see themselves restricted from free-choice regarding their own future*" (11th grade) "*I see people protesting for a better quality of life; a country tired of making financial sacrifices while not seeing any results from (…) They are tired of the current situation*" (2nd year)
LEVEL 3. (Identification followed by an analysis of the phenomenon, and personal engagement)	"*I usually go with my family because we think that if we stay home, lamenting, nothing will change. So we really need to go to the street, standing up for our rights*" (8th grade) "As long as we live in a democratic country, we have the right to speak up and show what we feel, and eventually be heard, even if not positively answered" (11th grade) "*This country is tired and desperate with the current state of affairs and we are trying to do what is possible, even if after so many demonstrations there are no results. But, as we can see, we are not a people that gives up easily*" *(2nd year)*

LEVEL 4. (Identification followed by an analysis that goes beyond the phenomenon)	"(…) *I also think that demonstrations are forms of protest against every kind of injustice related to animals, nature, human beings, environment, etc*." (8th grade) "*These images suggest an extreme indignation felt by the majority of the Portuguese people. These demonstrations are the result of policies considered unfair by the protesters. The images portrayed the desperation of people who worked their entire lives and that now see their future at risk. They try to have a better life and put an end to the injustices. Many people consider that Portugal is going through its worst moment ever.*" (11th grade) "*These images remind me of May 68 in France. Youngsters uniting against capitalism. I think these images also portray the brightside of the crisis is the end of people's inertia, the awakening of the people.*"(2nd year)
LEVEL 5. (Identification followed by an analysis that goes beyond the phenomenon, and personal engagement)	"*The more the demonstrations, the more the Government will think about us, we should not stop until the country gets back on its feet. If it were up to me, I would take all my friends to the demonstrations because I think it is really important to protest in order to try to change our country. I don't want this future for me and my friends. These demonstrations should be more frequent in Portugal, once it is through them that the Government hears us*." (8th grade) "*Portugal is living an unprecedented crisis, which is leading to demanding measures for economic recovery. These measures are taking away the money from Portuguese people, so we have to protest. We should not conform to all ideas and actions of our politicians; they govern through people, so we a have more voice than we sometimes think we have*." (11th grade) "(…) *the protests are the only and ultimate option, standing up for a country which is doing nothing but taking our lives away (…) the economic situation, the lack of employment and opportunities, mostly for young people, and the rise of poverty and emigration… these are the main factors [leading] people to the streets, fighting for rights*" (2nd year)

In order to assess the reliability of this new framework, we performed an *Intra-rater agreement* (in which consistency was measured by a test-retest design, with an interval of three months) and an *Inter-rater agreement*, measured through the calculation of Cohen's kappa coefficient (Cohen, 1960). In this procedure, an independent observer was instructed regarding the codification framework, and then analysed 15% of the categorised text units (Lima, 2013), which corresponds to 189 text units. Likewise the content categories system (see the reliability results in the section above), our model for the complexity of political thinking also proved reliable (*kappa* = .56 ; *p* = .000) according to the inter-rater agreement index (Brennan & Silman, 1992), showing the consistency of this analytical framework to assess the political cognition of Portuguese young people.

From 1107 youngsters, we analysed the discourses of 1028 respondents [79 non-answers: 8th grade: N = 15; 11th grade: N = 27; 2nd year: N = 37]. The next table

presents the distribution of the discourses in each level of complexity. These data complement Article 3, which was focused on the content analysis.

Table 4 – Percentage of text units coded, within each school year

	8th Grade	**11the Grade**	**2nd year of Univ.**
Level 1. Simple identification of the phenomenon	48.7%	51.9%	38%
Level 2. Identification followed by an analysis of the phenomenon	30.6%	30.7%	24.8%
Level 3. Identification followed by an analysis of the phenomenon, and personal implication	20.4%	8.7%	9.1%
Level 4. Identification followed by an analysis that goes beyond the phenomenon	8.7%	8.2%	9.3%
Level 5. Identification followed by an analysis that goes beyond the phenomenon, and personal implication	5.4%	4%	4.5%

The results show different patterns of discursive complexity across groups, underlining the fact that although "political sophistication" (Luskin, 1990) tends to increase with age, there are interesting variations. We see that 8th grade students performed well regarding discursive complexity, presenting the higher scores of personal engagement in the phenomena being discussed (levels 3 and 5). Thus, they feel the political context as a matter of direct concern, and also show good overall levels of discourse complexity. At the same time, if we look at the higher complexity level, without implication (level 4), it is university students that perform better, while young adolescents have more discourse codified in the most basic level of complexity (level 1). Furthermore, and relating these results with the ones presented in article 3, it is interesting to note that the students that appear to be more sophisticated in identifying specific problems about the

crisis (economic, labour and material) and that are more prone to criticising specific Governmental measures (the 11th graders), are also the ones that show lower levels of personal engagement. The data, then, seem to suggest that a more fine-grained analysis of the political situation goes hand-in-hand with a bit more personal detachment. In fact, our results regarding the complexity of discourse are quite counterintuitive, since we would expect to witness a clearer increase in the complexity students' discourses along with their personal development and educational level. This is why we should add that we cannot disregard the likelihood that 8th graders have a greater pre-disposition to engage with the task suggested in the questionnaire – an interpretation also supported by the fact that this school year was the one that registered less blank answers to the open-ended question. In any case, two conclusions may be drawn: the 14-year old youngsters are already quite aware of the political issues at stake in the Portuguese society (even if the older groups score a bit higher); and they present themselves as more involved in this scenario – whether as someone who is being affected by it or as someone who cares and wants to be a part of the change –, revealing that this age-group is pretty receptive to political education. By the same token that "education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it" (Arendt, 1968, p. 196), political action is only possible through a sense of 'we-ness', of engagement. To carry out the task of "renewing a common world", first we need to feel it as our own, as common (Ibid.).

Hopefully, this analytical framework of political cognition can be of added value in the field since it proved consistent and reliable in the analysis of young people's discourse, stressing that not only *what* youngster think, but also *how* they refer to socio-political situations, should be considered

CHAPTER 3.

Group perspectives on civic and political life: everyone influences everyone

3.1. Methodological and socio-political framework: European elections and focus group discussions

3.1.1. Socio-political context

The most recent European elections were held in May 2014, and were marked by some unprecedented features and outcomes. This was the first election since the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon. For the first time, the electoral results influenced directly the appointment of a candidate for the Presidency of the European Commission by the European Council, based on the party with most seats on the European Parliament (European Commission, n/d). This meant a more direct link between the citizens' vote in a given national party and the political direction taken by the European Union in the following five years. It also meant to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the European Commission and expand the citizens' possibility of choice (Ibid). Moreover, this was the largest election for the European Parliament that had ever taken place: citizens from 28 Member States were called upon to vote, with more than 12.000 candidates from almost 450 parties and lists competing for 751 seats (Treib, 2014). On July 15, 2014, Jean-Claude Juncker was elected head of the Commission by the European Parliament.

Yet, only about 500 million citizens of the 28 Member States voted in the European elections, that is, less than half of the electorate (42,54%). In Portugal, 33,76% of people voted, a percentage way lower than the European average[34]. Overall, the abstention rate increased compared to the 2009 elections. Eurostat data shows that in 2014 Portuguese young people were the ones who voted less, with only 19% of youngsters aged from 18 to 24 having voted; the European average for the same age group was 28%[35]. In contrast with the 47.9% of voters aged above 65 years old, youngsters between 18 and 24 years old presented a level of absenteeism higher than 70% and those between 25 and 29 years old a percentage slightly below 70% (Deželan, 2015). Although this problem is not new, as participation in the European elections has been decreasing since 1979, particularly among young people (Valente & Cunha, 2014), and has been addressed by the European Union in campaigns to promote youngsters'

[34] http://observador.pt/2014/08/05/abstencao-nas-europeias-de-2014-foi-maior-de-sempre-apesar-dos-primeiros-numeros-terem-mostrado-o-contrario/
[35] https://www.publico.pt/politica/noticia/os-jovens-estao-a-desistir-da-politica-e-a-politica-parece-prescindir-deles-1721887?page=-1

voter turnout[36], the record low levels in 2014 are troublesome. Data from a post-election survey in 2009 (Eurobarometer) show that youngsters are more reluctant in deciding to vote, and the majority of them either consider not having enough information to do it or find this election pointless, since they believe their vote will not change anything (Valente & Cunha, 2014). On the other hand, their main motivations for voting are related to economic issues, unemployment and the political role of the European Union (Ibid.). Portuguese youngsters, in particular, stated that their main motivations for voting were the concern about democracy and the influence of these elections in political decisions.

Regarding the voting turnout in the 2014 elections, a striking result emerged: a record number of candidates from Eurosceptic parties were elected, with the most radical ones advocating the exit of their countries from the European Union (Treib, 2014). Eurosceptic parties won in 23 out of the 28 Member States[37]. Thus, both the high rates of abstention and the voting results point towards a serious discrediting of European institutions, along with the electoral punishment of national governments, as the sovereign debt crisis and the austerity political measures adopted all over Europe framed the 2014 European elections quite strongly. This contributed greatly to the widespread perception, in the European electorate, that the decisions affecting their lives were being imposed to their national governments by the European Commission, the IMF and even the German government (Magalhães, 2016). The perception that domestic politics are controlled by supranational institutions has brought about relatively unpredictable consequences that may end up undermining the very nature of the European project (Treib, 2014).

Together with the Eurosceptic drift that resulted from these elections, the rise of right-wing parties also stands out. The victory of the National Front in France was the most striking example, but also the UKIP in the United Kingdom, the Danish People's Party in Denmark and the Party of Freedom in Netherlands. The anti-EU political right-wing was considered the winner of this election (Treib, 2014). Simultaneously, leftist and centrist Eurosceptic parties also accomplished pretty remarkable results, as the case of Syriza in Greece, the Five Star Movement in Italy, the United Left and the Podemos in Spain. In Portugal, we witnessed the surprising success of MPT, lead by Marinho e Pinto, an unorthodox conservative lawyer, who succeeded in putting across a message

[36] http://pt.euronews.com/2013/05/31/ue-lanca-campanha-de-incentivo-ao-voto-dos-jovens-nas-eleices-europeias/

[37] Estonia, Luxembourg, Malta, Romania and Slovenia were the exception in this regard.

against corruption and conventional political parties. The rise of Eurosceptic parties exposed the attraction exerted by populism and the adoption of an agenda favouring direct participation and grass-roots democracy to face the European dictates (Treib, 2014). In the analysis of the electoral behaviour in European elections, political scientists argue that citizens' vote may be driven either by the sincere expression of their preferences or by inflicting losses to governments as a form of protest (Magalhães, 2016). Indeed, in the vast majority of the countries, parties in government obtained lower results than in the preceding national election. This situation was more acute in countries experiencing greater hardship, as voters perceive that there is a lack of real choice regarding austerity policies and that there is little room to challenge the European governance: therefore, sincere/ideological voting was withdrawn in favour of protest voting. However, Treib (2014) claims that, in the case of the 2014 election, this Eurosceptic trend cannot be interpreted as a mere protest against governments. Rather, it is the very process of European Union voting that should be considered, as different visions about the European Union are at stake, and therefore the success of the Eurosceptic parties reveals that citizens are against European policies. This argument is fleshed out further in the examples of France and the UK, as the available data gathered after the elections show that, despite the fact that dissatisfaction with domestic politics has motivated both National Front and UKIP voters, they stress that France and the UK should leave the Eurozone, highlighting their disagreement with the European project as the main reason for having voted the way they did (Treib, 2014). These elections, then, showed that the anti-establishment agenda works. The appeal to radical reforms as a way out of the European mode of doing politics is attracting citizens to alternatives to traditional parties. Still, as pointed out by Trieb (2014), it is unlikely that the political direction taken at the European level changes, since the European Parliament is still composed of a majority of pro-integrationist parties: it is likely, however, that this will lead to an even stronger Eurosceptic drift in the next European elections.

2.1. Methodological considerations: sample, materials and procedures

Young people seem to be turning away from electoral and conventional politics, which may not mean they are uninterested in politics per se, but instead, quite critical of the way governments respond to people's needs. Keeping in line with the goal of understanding better how young people relate to politics and what are their participatory

trends and contexts, we deemed it important to listen to what different groups of youngsters, in unconventional schooling pathways, had to say regarding youth participation. How do youngsters perceive and relate to civic and political issues? What needs to be changed to improve such relationship (if anything)? What do their experiences bring about in terms of personal and social change? We tried to address such questions (which correspond to *Research Question V*) through the organization of focus group discussions with participants that are outside the regular school system.

Focus group discussions, as a tool for qualitative research, have been widely used in the education field (Cohen et al., 2000), and are characterised by fostering a collective discursive dynamic, which in our study will enable exploring how individuals, interacting with each other, make sense of their experiences and, from them, elaborate considerations about the relationship between youth and politics and the value of participation. The exceptionality of focus group discussions lies in the intentional creation of time and space for the debate of perspectives, opinions and analyses, guaranteeing room for dissensus. They are often mentioned as particularly appropriate for the study of young people's experiences and understandings, as they can discuss concepts in their own terms (e.g., O'Toole et al. 2003; Kovacheva, 2005). Focus groups are known for stimulating discourses that may trigger consciousness arousal in real time, fostering more complex ways of thinking (Wilkinson, 1999) derived from the topic raised by the researcher. His/her role should be focused on promoting the discussion in line with research topics, not excluding the possibility of intentionally challenging some of the arguments presented and making sure that all participants feel they have time and a supportive environment to express themselves. Importantly, researchers should take a secondary role, as focus groups are about "the explicit use of interaction to generate data" (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999, p. 5). In fact, as claimed by Myers and Macnaghten (1999), "the great strength of focus groups as a technique is in the liveliness, complexity and unpredictability of the talk, where participants can make sudden connections that confuse the researchers' coding but open up their thinking" (p. 175).

Our own experience in conducting focus group discussions tells us that a group of this sort should be composed of six to ten participants (Malafaia et al., 2012) – although some literature suggests figures between four and twelve (Morgan, 1988) – and preferably led by two researchers, since it is a demanding process. In the focus groups of this research we intended to reach youngsters outside the regular school system, in contrast to the quantitative study developed previously, so we could also

include their perspectives regarding participation. Furthermore, we also asked for their comments on some of the results from the quantitative study, helping us make sense of them.

We engaged with young people from vocational/professional schools, religious groups and community projects from the metropolitan area of Porto, both from the urban centre and peripheries. Participants were either in alternative educational pathways or had dropped out from school (temporarily or for good). During the focus groups discussions, we distributed a leaflet highlighting results of the survey. The first part of the leaflet presented the research, and was organised in four topics: 1) *Demonstrations and social protests*; 2) *Young people and governance*; 3) *Youth participation experiences*; 4) *Democracy* (see Appendix 3). Regarding each topic, contrasting results were intentionally portrayed, instigating the respondents to take a stance by asking "What you think?" or "What is your opinion about this issue?". So, for instance, in the part titled 'Democracy', we stated that "Some youngsters question the democratic system we live in, pointing some of its flaws and fragilities", followed by some youngsters' excerpts from the open-ended item of the questionnaire[38] Right after, based on the data related to one of the items of the scale 'trust in the form of government' (a = .81) used in the questionnaire, we added that "However, most of them consider that, when compared with other political systems, democracy is still the best government system for Portugal". The elaboration of these leaflets was intended to have youngsters interpret the results from the previous phase, and also to engage them in data collection, as they were invited to the role of interviewers of their friends: those who accepted the invitation took some leaflets to record their friends' perspectives and opinions about the results.

A total of 40 youngsters (60% female), aged between 15-23, participated in 5 focus group discussions that took place between May and September 2014. About two weeks after each focus group, we met some of the youngsters to collect the leaflets they had taken with them and filled out with their friends' comments.

[38] In this case, the excerpts were coded in the content categories of the third major theme ('Reflection about the status/condition of democracy') that is part of the broader content categorisation presented in the previous chapter.

Table 5 – Sample composition of FGD (context, gender and age) and leaflets collected

Type of Context	Number of Participants	Ages	Leaflets collected
Professional School	Total = 10 (7 Boys; 3 Girls)	15, 16, 17, 18	1 (girl, 26 years old)
Arts Contemporary Academy	Total = 8 (3 Boys; 5 Girls)	16, 17, 18, 21	6 (3 boys; 3 girls ages: 16, 17, 18, 21)
Artistic School	Total = 7 (3 Boys; 4 Girls)	15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21	1 (boy, 19 years old)
Religious Group	Total = 6 (3 Boys; 3 Girls)	15, 18, 20, 23	5 (5 girls; 1 boy ages: 20, 21, 22, 23, 30)
Community Project (Escolhas Program[39])	Total = 9 (5 Boys; 4 Girls)	13, 16, 18, 19, 22	1 (girl, 13 years old)

To conduct the focus group discussions we developed a guide, broad enough to facilitate the debate but nonetheless focused on the research aims and questions (Tonkiss, 2006), since we intended to address the youngsters' perceptions and experiences about civic and political participation (see Appendix 4 for the Guide of Focus Group Discussion). Overall, our guide was organised into four main dimensions:

a) General perceptions about civic and political participation

(a1: why people participate; a2: how young people express themselves and what are the effects of such participation)

b) Interest and attention about political issues

(b1: what are the topics that concern you more; b2: do you follow the news and what is happening in politics through newspapers or in the internet; b3: do you talk with friends about social and political issues)

c) Participation experiences

(c1: in what forms of civic and political participation are you engaged in; c2: what do such experiences bring to you and your community; c3: what do you learn from these experiences; c4: are different perspectives and opinions, including your own, shared and valued during participation experiences; c5: what are the main factors motivating and hindering participation)

[39] "Escolhas Program" is a nationwide program for youth in underprivileged communities. Existing since 2001, Escolhas Program finances, currently, 88 projects (may be 130 until the end of 2018) in communities all over Portugal, involving 75000 participants (up to 30 years old): http://www.programaescolhas.pt/apresentacao

[d) Presentation and discussion about the results of the 1st phase of the study (survey) and preparation of data collection by the participants].

Furthermore, and aiming to initiate and facilitate the discussion, at the beginning of each focus group, a set of images portraying some forms of participation (e.g., voting, protests, graffiti, blogs) and political and civic issues (e.g., human rights, environment, racism) was distributed to the participants. Each participant should then pick one and explain his/her choice. Previous experiences (Malafaia et al., 2012) showed that this approach works as an ice-breaker to trigger the discussion about the topics at stake. All focus group discussions were recorded and subsequently transcribed. The material was analysed with NVivo 11. Some previously defined content categories were used in this process, while others were transformed and new ones emerged. The results of this will be presented below: section 3.2. will be devoted to the participants' opinions about youth engagement, namely the identification of current participatory trends, as well as their most relevant experiences; section 3.3. presents and discusses their perspectives about the kinds of resources and conditions considered important for participation, such as individual and structural factors that they deem to have an influence on their political interest, and how they articulate; finally, section 3.4. will focus on the youngsters' views of the political system, specifically on how democracy is working, the role of the political class and what can improve the relationship between youth and politics.

3.2. Perspectives and experiences of civic and political participation

Casimiro[40], an 18 year-old-boy from a rural village in the Porto district who takes part in a religious group, while examining the youth's levels of participation portrayed in the leaflets we handed to all participants, showed himself surprised by the results, namely regarding the relatively high level of political consumerism, but also regarding volunteering. This opinion was shared by others in the group:

> Casimiro – *Buy or boycott… I was surprised… But concerning volunteering… I do volunteering every Sunday and I don't see so many people there. We are the 'kids from the hospital'. I don't see young people participating there; the only participation I see is from the young scouts, and even the scouts go once a month at most.*
>
> Osvaldo – *I was also surprised for volunteering ranking first.*
>
> Bruno (17 years old) – *Perhaps people say they do volunteering but, after all, do nothing.*
>
> Carla Malafaia – In your opinion, what would be the form of participation (…) that would score higher, then?
>
> Bruno – *Participation through the internet.*

From Osvaldo's experience (a 21-year-old boy from the same group as Casimiro) there are not so many youngsters doing volunteering, although he himself engages in volunteering, visiting patients of the oncological department of an hospital, and elderly people in their homes during holidays. These experiences, he said, contribute to a more 'valuable and humanised' way of living life, due to the contact with the serious problems of abandonment and loneliness.

Young participants from another group agreed with the role played by the internet for people their age. They say that youngsters use the internet often to share things that concern them, to influence their social networks and, in a way, to present their political self to the (their) world. João and Carlos, both 21 years old, students in an arts school in the centre of Porto, talked about this:

> João – *Social networks have a huge impact. Although it is not a matter of physical mobilisation, it is a matter of thought, of transmitting an idea and starting to change mentalities.*
>
> Carlos – *We share things about racism… even some political things… things that influence us.*

Not only the internet seems to be important for young people, but also other forms of expression. Music and graffiti, for example, were mentioned as important vehicles for young people to get messages across, although there is a lot of prejudice against these

[40] All participants' names are fictional, in order to ensure anonymity.

kinds of expressions, which some participants believed would obtain higher scores on the levels of youngsters' participation. Participants complained about graffiti usually being considered an act of vandalism and the lack of real efforts to understand its meaning. From their perspective, both graffiti and the lyrics of some songs (such as in rap music) awake young people's minds, calling attention to social problems.

When participants talked about demonstrations, we came to find similarities with the results from the quantitative study. Similarly, different opinions arose, recalling two of our content analysis categories from the open-ended question: the 'importance of demonstrations to fight for rights' and the 'phenomenon of illegitimate participation'. Sandra, an 18-year-old-girl, involved in a community project in one of Porto's neighbourhoods, talked about the recent demonstrations:

> *I look at this as a new revolution, but ours. Because if we do not mobilise now, it will end as it was in Salazar's time [referring to the dictatorship period]; in other words, we have this power, of continuing to have freedom and all of that, so I think that we should keep fighting for our rights and our freedom, and not waiting for someone to play our role for us.*

On the other hand, Osvaldo, picking a picture of one of these demonstrations and another picture portraying the act of voting, expressed his position against them:

> Osvaldo – *I am against demonstrations because, in my opinion, there are more conscious and correct forms to protest.*
>
> Carla Malafaia – Why do you think that this demonstration is not conscious and correct?
>
> Osvaldo – *Because the majority of people who are there do not have this* [shows the voting image]. *And, not having this, you are not entitled to have opinion.*
>
> Carla Malafaia – Those who do not vote cannot have an opinion?
>
> Osvaldo – *Everyone can have an opinion. But people here* [showing the vote image] *defend rights. Portuguese people have not learned it yet… 'oh yeah, I fight for rights'… 'Come on, do you know that living in a society means that you have duties as well?'. Some people do not have this conscience.*

A 20-year-old boy interviewed by one of the participants from the religious group also stated that "instead of doing demonstrations we should all be thinking about what we can do better, as many of those who demonstrate are guilty of what is happening". This is a kind of discourse we also found in the analysis of the comments to the open-ended question of the survey, which we categorised as 'the phenomenon of individual responsibility'. Furthermore, there is a general opinion that demonstrations do not have much of an impact. As argued by Casimiro, "demonstrations never get anywhere", while recognising that "it is important to protest because people are less and less

entitled to have rights". An 18-year-old boy and a girl of the same age, interviewed by participants from an arts school, also said that, albeit considering that demonstrations are really important to stand up for rights, are becoming "something banal", which in their point of view undermines the goals and strength of the demonstrations. They both underline the frequency with which demonstrations have occurred without producing any direct political consequences. In her turn, another interviewee – a 22-year-old girl from the rural village – stated that a demonstration "is always useful, even if it only produces disquietude. It is the disquietude that often triggers social change".

Likewise, voting turnout was a burning issue throughout the focus groups. While all participants consider it important, some suggest that it does not change anything and that most youngsters do not vote. Although some youngsters argue that voting is ineffective, the majority of them showed themselves critical of people who do not vote. During the focus group in an arts school in the centre of Porto, participants talked about this topic, following the European elections that had taken place just a few weeks before. These girls are 18 years old, except Lara, who is 16.

> Rafaela – *I asked a friend of mine if she was going to vote because she had already turned 18. She said something like 'what for, if everything will remain the same?'.*
>
> Maria – *From that perspective no one would ever vote.*
>
> Rafaela – *Exactly! I do not agree either. I think we have to do whatever it takes to get all this better.*
>
> Lara – *I think that these are people's excuses not to bother.*
>
> Susana – *In this election, the majority of people did not vote, they didn't care. I used to think the same way, that staying home and voting blank was the same thing, but it is not.*
>
> Lara – *Then, you do demonstrations, you speak about the April 25th, but you stay at home regretting when it comes to vote. I do not agree with that!*
>
> Rafaela – *One of our teachers said to us: this will change only if we want it, if we keep voting in the same party, this will go nowhere. So, basically, we have this power.*
>
> Lara – *I felt that I had a role in society when I started voting.*

Regarding others forms of participation, political consumerism emerged as a relevant topic. Not only participants showed they were interested in it, some of them talked about some of their experiences. Osvaldo shared with the group some things he read about a woman in England who went to Primark and found a request for help in a blouse's etiquette.

> Osvaldo – *Clothes are made by children; football balls are made by children. Children from China, Pakistan, India, who are abducted from their families to work in manufacture. I know this because I work in manufacture too and I know what happens in other parts of the globe. And this makes me so angry.*

Also, in other focus groups, such as in the arts school, participants talked about this topic:

> Maria – *I've already talked to some people about this issue. I've already promised myself that I would never buy Adidas clothes again… because of the way clothes are made.*
>
> Lara – *We were just talking about that on our way here, about the news of that girl that found a help request in some etiquette of something that she had bought in Primark.*
>
> João – *There are a lot of brands, we know that… There is this thing I started doing at my home and I've talked about with my sister: Greenpeace just made public a list of fishes that Sonae is selling that are endangered species, and I've already put it in the fridge so everyone can remember… I suppose that political consumerism is about this, right?*
>
> Carla Malafaia – Sure.
>
> João – They do a lot of trawling, killing a lot of species that are thrown in the garbage afterwards. In the Greenpeace website they entitled the list as "when you arrive to Continente [a major supermarket chain] and see these fishes, please do not buy them because they are fished through trawling, which kills a lot of species". I'm aware that I use a lot of stuff, mostly clothes, which are not produced through legal and fair means.

The young participants talked about diverse participation experiences: volunteering in an hospital, in a dog kennel and in the Food Bank, but also about their involvement in the scout's movement, in the young parliament, in arts groups, in a political party, in an anti-fascist group, in a school radio, in a religious group, and so on. For example, Manuel (16 years old), from a vocational school in Porto, spoke about an anti-fascist group he is a member of. A small and informal group that, according to him, "is more aggressive, in the extent that it is in favour of civil disobedience when necessary". He said that it is mostly a group of friends and they sometimes organise small actions. "It was created recently… we share a lot of things… and sometimes we do some things… Well, we burned a PNR flag [a Portuguese nationalist political party], we took part in the demonstration against homophobia that happened in Aliados [the main square of Porto city] last weekend". In his turn, Henrique (18 years old), from the arts school, told us about an organisation he belongs to, called OM ('Mobilisation Operation'), an international Christian movement that "has had a huge impact in communitarian help, mostly in taking education to countries around the world." Clemente, a 17-year-old boy from a professional school in a city near Porto, spoke about when, thanks to his grandmother's influence, he volunteered in a dog kennel, feeding and taking care of the animals; this was not an easy experience, considering the mistreatment and neglect that affected some of them. "That was shocking sometimes, but I grew up and I felt I was

doing the right thing", said Clemente. 'Feeling good by helping' was mentioned by other participants, for example about scouts. Sandra and Alice, both from the community project, talked about it:

> Sandra – *Of course we feel good, since we are not just helping ourselves because we are making good actions. Looking at these people we help, we make ourselves happier.*
> *Alice – I've been a scout for 10 years now (...) The first moment I got there I was fascinated (...) The scouts is the best place to learn things. (...) For example, we are much more aware of the environmental issues. This is one of the scouts' laws: to protect the plants and the animals. (...) And one of the scouts' principles is that a scout's duty starts at home. In other words, the scouts [as an organisation] continue what the parents begin.*

In the arts school group, the 'feeling-better' discourse about volunteering was discussed by some participants when Lara spoke about her experience in the Food Bank:

> Lara – *I feel good doing that and my will is to help… a lot of people say 'I give just because I want to help'… I don't say that such will is not sincere but there is always a flip side…*
> Henrique – *Almost egocentrism…*
> Lara – *And, then, there is the curriculum part.*
> Maria – *It is like when we confess to receive the priest's blessing. Like 'I did my part today'.*

For two of the participants, doing volunteering was motivated by the family: Clemente's grandmother encouraged him to do volunteering in a dog kennel and João's parents have been engaged in social intervention for several years:

> João – *My father is the president of an association for disabled people and my mother works in the sociocultural area. My father has a motor disability, and I remember my entire life being in the association, in contact with the beneficiaries and in contact with the struggle, because there is a daily battle, ranging from the architectural barriers, … One of these days we all went to the museum and we looked at the stairs and we had like five hundred steps and no elevator. The people of the museum were about to give us the money back, and I said 'no, no one gives the money back'. We had beneficiaries weighing like 100 kgs, but we carried them on our backs and they visited the museum on the social workers and volunteers' backs. But they visited the museum. The museum kept the money and I think that the message was delivered: 'you need to do something'. Since I signed up as volunteer, I have my own ideas, but my father doesn't always agree. As president, he thinks that the fight must be done in other ways. He would probably have handled this situation at the in a bureaucratic way… also because of his position as president, it is not convenient to be defiant.*

Besides talking about their experiences and their meanings, the participants also mentioned some other experiences and contexts they would like to get engaged in. Henrique told us about arts groups which, according to him, "have something to say to

today's society through performances and through local intervention; for instance, the 'portable theatre', which through artistic processes takes Portuguese literature to schools and people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods that do not have access to it".

Cátia, a 16-year-old girl from the arts group, talked about the involvement in youth wings of political parties:

> *I would like to try, without any serious commitment. I think it would enlighten me a little bit, because I think that we should get in contact with all kinds of stuff. I think we should not only have our friends, who are all left-wing. I think we should listen to everyone's opinions: 'why are you left-wing? Why are you right-wing? Why you don't like any of them?'. I mean, try all of them and see what are they made of. I mean, I would say that arts groups are the kind of thing that makes more sense to me, because it is not about saying, it is about doing and thinking about it, but perhaps I'm wrong and I should try other things as well.*

This statement, however, raised some comments because some participants associate belonging to a political party to a biased network of people, in which everyone thinks the same way, and in which participants turn into some "cocky little politicians", in Henrique's words, referring to "people who think they have more knowledge, more education and more money".

In this section, we mapped the main youth participatory trends according to the youngsters' perspectives. These experiences proved to be quite diverse, despite the recurrent discourse about the non-participation of young people. The images (used as icebreakers) and the leaflet portraying the participation levels of students from the regular school system were fundamental in making participants speak about their experiences throughout the discussion. They tended to emphasise the importance of more juvenile means of expression (e.g., music and graffiti), assuming a contrasting stance regarding the adult prejudice against them; while regarding the most well-known forms of participation (e.g., voting and demonstrations) as largely ineffective, they nonetheless still emphasised their importance. Political consumerism seems to be a hot topic among youngsters, about which they talked among each other, shared information and took concrete action. The next section will focus on the main factors influencing youth civic and political involvement.

3.3. The crossroad of factors at stake in political engagement

The data presented in the previous section showed that young people tend to get engaged through sources and channels that speak their language – often devalued from an adult point of view – and closer to their concerns. In this regard, João, from the arts school, while talking about the ways young people relate to politics nowadays, highlights that they are turning away from partisanship but nonetheless getting involved when issues are close to them:

> *I think that youngsters today want another way of doing politics, not the politics related to political parties; I think that each person acts according to what affects him/her directly. For example, we organised a demonstration at the beginning of the year because we have been without subsidies for three or four months … You see, we did it because it was really affecting us.*

Thus, in João's opinion, when young people feel that something matters to them, they mobilise and make something happen. João considers himself and his friends as being more interested in political matters than the majority of youngsters due to the fact that, unlike other schools (public schools), in the arts school they often struggle with difficulties in their daily school life, and this triggers their engagement and provides them with more tools as well. He says that:

> *Unfortunately, public school students don't have so much interest as we have, because we are related to the arts. By being directly related to the arts, we have more ways to express ourselves and we are much more affected… because public schools have all the necessary means, and here we sometimes lack material because there is no money. I think we are very affected, but on the other hand we also have, in some way, more tools, not the usual tools…*

This opinion echoed in another focus group, in a vocational school, when Manuel and Rodrigo (16 and 19 years old, respectively) discussed the link between participation (specially taking part in protests) and the individuals' socioeconomic status:

> Manuel – *Only those who feel problems go to protests. Poor people.* […] *By 'poor' I don't mean people who starve.*
>
> Rodrigo – *But there are people who have money, who live well, but do understand what others feel and support them in their cause.*
>
> Manuel – *Well, they understand but I'm not sure if they support them.*
>
> Rodrigo – *I know people who support. They have a lot of money and there they are, always active, with their friends. And although [a certain cause] doesn't mean anything to them directly, since they don't face difficulties, they feel for what others are going through.*

According to Manuel's experiences in several different schools, having money or not comes with a certain 'mentality', and he differentiates those who feel they do not have to make any effort and those who know they have to keep trying to bring about change. And, for him, participation is all about that, about changing the status quo, and this does not fit in with a 'rich person's mentality'.

Not only economic resources play relevant roles on youngsters' engagement, but also the information at their disposal and how it shapes their political literacy are crucial factors for participants. All of them stressed that making young people interested in politics is hard, and that most of them are not interested at all. Yet, they all had some important things to say. Henrique, who recently turned 18, stressed several times his interest in political issues in general. Although he wasn't 18 years old at the time of the European elections in May, he said he considers voting and being attentive to politics quite important, despite how challenging this might be.

> Henrique – *I think today it is very important that we have a choice. But in the midst of so many parties and so much politics and so many possibilities… I think it is necessary to know what to choose. In my case, I'm not so much into those things…I don't have to vote yet, but I will soon…*
>
> Carla Malafaia – And you think it is important…
>
> Henrique – *I think it is really important! Of course, I read some things. because I'm interested in politics. I think that being interested in politics is to be interested in my country, in my community, in my society.*

When it comes to participation, sometimes it is not a matter of interest, but rather a matter of lack of appropriate information that distances youngsters from the political world. They pointed out some obstacles to youngsters' active engagement, namely the lack of accessible, well-explained and less-sensationalist information. From their point of view, these are factors that turn youngsters away from conventional politics.

> Rafaela – *I never liked politics. But I'm forced to pay attention; I mean, not forced, but I need to know so I can vote. Only the best-known political parties appear on TV. When I saw that parties' list [referring to the European elections]…. I had never heard about many of them!*
>
> Ricardo (17 years old) – *And there are some expressions they* [politicians and political journalists] *use that we don't know what they are talking about. I think that in the TV news, the newspapers… I like reading the newspaper, I read Público*[41] *almost every day since we have it here in school.*
>
> João – *I think that disinterest is growing because we turn the TV on SIC Notícias*[42]*, and we start watching a debate with four gentlemen from four different parties, and I see it for 10 minutes and realise that I don't understand what they are saying, what kind of issues they are*

[41] A widely read, non-tabloid, Portuguese journal.
[42] A Portuguese cable news channel.

addressing. So, people lose interest and will not finish watching the debate and, consequently, will be uninformed.

João, then, sums up the vicious cycle in which misinformation (and misguided information) leads to disinterest which, in turn, reinforces the lack of information. In this respect, the role of the media was not mentioned in a good light in the focus groups. In the arts school, Lara also commented on the nature of the political debates seen in the news, saying that they are too aggressive. In her words: "nowadays, you don't see people defending their positions, instead they are always attacking each other". In the same group, João added that it is hard to be interested in and voting when politicians themselves do not seem concerned about reaching people:

The other day I was watching a political commentator saying that voting in this election [the European elections] was very complicated because political parties had completely forgotten about Europe. Rather, they focused on inflicting attacks to each other, so people didn't know what they were going to do regarding Europe, what were their positions about it.

The tone and the content of the political issues covered do not stimulate youngsters' engagement. In a professional school from a city near Porto, Clemente, Luís and Júlio, all 17 years old, discuss political interest from another angle, highlighting the issue of age:

Luís – *Young people do not care about political things.*

Júlio – *That is why adults do not take into account what youngsters say, because youngsters take everything for granted and do not care about politics. That is just how young people are. But when we grow older and we start working and have those kinds of worries, then…*

Therefore, in some cases, there is talk about full citizenship being dependent on age, either regarding the legal age to vote (18 years old) or related to having a job and, subsequently, adult responsibilities. Some participants assume this postponement, while others criticize it. In the vocational school in Porto, Beatriz (18 years old) recognises that watching the news is sometimes boring. She feels that she should be more interested, but argues that later in life political concerns will eventually grow.

Beatriz – *I watch television during dinner, at my grandparents', and sometimes I get tired of it because it is politics all the time. Some day later I will be concerned about it.*

Manuel – *Beatriz, you are already 18 years old!*

Because – *But when I'm older…*

Manuel – *When you start getting interested you'll be very old, then.*

> Carlos – *I think that all of this has to do with each person's interests. I mean, it all comes from each person's aspirations and plans for the future… this kind of youngsters will probably be more interested.*

Age is presented as a kind of boundary that justifies being more or less interested in politics (the corollary of having a job and being independent), exception made to those youngsters who, while still young, have "aspirations and plans about the future". In fact, the stability that is seen as coming with adulthood may be the crucial element here. Similar discourses emerged in the professional school. Following the argument that 'being-an-adult-leads-to-participation', Rafael (15 years old) adds that young people should grow up earlier; that is, to get a job and become independent, which would promote their political interest and participation. Júlio, however, argues that if youngsters were allowed to get a job when they are 16, the majority of them would stop studying: "and if you stop studying you will not have enough knowledge, which would undermine the purpose", he replied to Rafael. Still, getting a job and becoming an adult seems a priority for some of the participants, who in this regard show themselves satisfied for not being in a regular school, while complaining about the difficult scenario that, even so, is ahead of them:

> Clemente – *I was in a regular school before, but when I realised how our State is, how things are, I figured out that in a regular course… I did not want to go to university, I wouldn't make it, so I would finish high school and would be unemployed. That is why I chose to came to a professional school because I have more chances to start working right away. Still, I know I may end up unemployed.*

On the other hand, the idea that youngsters are, by default, uninterested in politics seems to be related with an adult-centric perspective which they seem to have internalised.

> Cátia – *In general, youngsters are quite underrated about what they think. For instance, in my home, what I think doesn't matter. And this ends up constraining every time we [young people] want to express our opinions… it is like 'young people talking… what do they know? They know nothing about life'. And even if I do not know anything about life, that may also influence the way I think and, perhaps, in a good way. Maybe because of that I have more innovative ideas. Who knows? I think that this is the age to discover things and start constructing our own positions, and we should not be underrated.*

This is a widespread opinion throughout the focus groups. Casimiro says that "it seems like people don't want us to grow", stating that every time they do something for the community (such as organising home visits to the elderly during the holidays) it does

not feel that people really appreciate that. In the professional school, participants also indicated that they feel that youngsters are not taken seriously: "people think we are too young and we don't know what we are talking about, and we can't do anything about it", Rafael said. In this vein, Fabiana (18 years old), from the community project group in Porto, said that youngsters are not heard, sometimes neither at school, by their teachers, nor at home, by their parents. In her opinion, the legal age of majority should be below 18. She argues that "a 15-year-old-person can understand what is wrong and right in politics, so it makes no sense that we reach majority at the age of 18". This opinion was supported by the other participants in the group.

Finally, looking at the reasons most frequently mentioned for not participating, by the students who participated in our survey, the participants in the focus groups found it odd that lack of time was the reason most indicated for not participating. Most of them considered it a lame excuse because students never lack time. This opinion was shared by the majority of young people interviewed by the participants in the focus groups. The youngsters from the rural village agreed that lack of opportunities in the place where they live is an important reason for not participating. For example, Casimiro, referring to his regular volunteering at the hospital in Porto, said he would feel even better doing volunteering at his place if it was possible to do so. Additionally, he talked about the survey's item regarding the lack of knowledge about institutions and organisations.

> Casimiro – *I would say lack of opportunities at the place I live in and lack of knowledge of institutions and organisations. Because sometimes one doesn't participate because one doesn't know…I mean, he/she may even know it exists but doesn't know what is it.*

In this section we learned that, from the participants' point of view, there is a range of elements affecting political interest and participation: e.g., the economic conditions of one's life; being an adult or, at least, someone who has a job and future prospects (something more difficult); having access to information (conveyed in an appropriate way and in an non-judgemental environment). Participants feel they need more political knowledge, with a reliable basis, capable of simulating them to think and act politically; in other words, they need that the political sphere becomes closer to their concerns. Socioeconomic resources are discussed from different angles: from an individual and a school-level perspective, participants seem to agree that difficult conditions instigate participation; from a macro level, however, the crisis and the difficulties in finding a job delay even more the arrival of adulthood and, therefore, the 'participatory responsibilities'. Age, then, is brought to the discussion also as a legitimising element,

distinguishing between those who can and those who cannot talk about politics – a kind of adult-centric discourse that youngsters themselves tend to reproduce, while simultaneously criticising. The lack of opportunities in the place where they live and the lack of knowledge about institutions and organisations are also mentioned as obstacles to participation, particularly by youngsters from rural areas.

3.4. Views on the political system and the demand for political education

Young participants examined the leaflet's topic on 'Democracy', in which the respondents to the questionnaire had pointed out some flaws of the democratic system in what regards freedom of expression and the people's power, despite considering democracy the best system of government. Regarding this theme, some of the participants in the focus groups mentioned the 'pre-and-post-April' talk they frequently heard from their relatives. Cátia told us about when her father criticises the current times, while Casimiro spoke about how his grandfather suffered in the dictatorship.

> Cátia – *My father, who at the time of April 25 was 17 years old, sometimes says… not that back then was better, but that 'In Salazar's time there was no lack of respect and bla bla bla…"*

> Casimiro – *I've always heard my grandpa saying how bad it was… so, whoever says those kinds of things, like this kid in the leaflet saying that we are closer to a dictatorship… those who lived in those times and felt it on their skin… it is light-hearted saying stuff like this (…).*

Throughout the focus groups we also encountered a generalised discourse about Salazar's times (dictatorship) being related to a better economy and the present (democracy) being related to freedom. For instance: "We had money but we had no freedom" (João); "Back then, in Salazar's times, although we had no freedom, the country's economy was much better than it is today… most people had their jobs, even if most of them were men because women were confined to the family" (Fabiana). Actually, this was the kind of discourse we also found in the analysis of the open-ended question in the survey.

While talking about the democratic system, participants criticized the lack of responsiveness from the Government, which empties out the value of freedom of expression. Democracy is discussed in relation to the European framework and the national corruption problem.

> Osvaldo – *Democracy doesn't really exist. At this moment, the democratic system in Portugal is corrupted. We do not have a democracy working as it should be. In fact, it is not only in Portugal, it is at the European level as well… because we depend on… For example, the European Community is not democratic. Supposedly, we should be in some kind of European United States, in which everyone helps everyone. But what we see is a country stronger than the others… and Portugal has to be a servant of the others that have the money. Ultimately, this is not the European Community as it was created. (…) We, as a country, have grown a lot since the April 25. If we look at the images and the stories of what all this was until 1974… well, a lot of infra-structures were created, a better political system was built up… but then, the systems were*

corrupted. (…) I recognise that we have a debt that needs to be paid off, but at the end of the day, the political system needs to be able to manage better the expenses and invest more in the people. (…) The problem is that the way the debt is being managed is impacting what we are, how we live. (…) From my point of view, the political system in Portugal needs to be cleaned. Although I agree with certain political parties' ideas at the local level, I think that at the national level we should have other policies. We should regionalise the country, this is one of my ideas in the party I belong to, and I would like to see it go through. I think this would help Portugal to see where the economy really comes from. This way, we could manage to create a democratic system truly made by the people. We fight and they [politicians] do whatever they want to do… they use public money for private business and this is quite revolting. (…) we don't believe in politics and we don't believe in the political system because its is vitiated. I admire the political system of the Nordic countries because they are a kind of people who are aware that a society is made and supported by all.

This opinion finds similarities in another focus group. Henrique also spoke about a more local and communitarian kind of politics:

Henrique – *Based on the little politics I know, I believe much more in local and regional politics than in politics for the entire country, because I think it is much easier and more feasible to bring about change through baby steps in a small context, and then make arrangements at the national level. If we can change small things in a local community and then move on to a bigger level… Well, even so, it is hard to change things.*

Although most participants often underlined that they are not so much into political subjects, they revealed themselves pretty much attentive to what is happening. When they discussed the state of Portuguese democracy, they showed concern with the results of the European elections, namely with the rise of the extreme right-wing in Europe.

Maria – *This is scary…*

Henrique – *History is repeating itself. We will have a third world war. In Greece, in classical antiquity, there was democracy and then came imperialism… it seems like big falls have to precede big advances… but I don't know what will be the result. Even here, with Marinho e Pinto… extreme positions are definitely gaining ground.*

Young participants also talked about what they considered to be the need to vote for other parties, different from the ones that have been governing Portugal in the last decades.

Osvaldo – *Politicians should reflect what we want, and they don't. One of the persons that most undermined this country is still in power and, on the top of it, came to the television saying that 10.000€ per month is not enough for him. Two parties are the guilty of this whole crisis… the others have no power.*

In another group, Rafaela says that because of the fact that older people have gone through the dictatorship, they are probably afraid of a huge change and that is why they always vote for the same parties.

> *(…) Ok, we are young and we did not live the April 25, which was a big change for them [older people]. I get it. But we see that politicians promise a lot and do nothing, so we are not going to be stupid and vote for the same thing.*

Participants consider that politicians do not take people, even less young people, into account. In this matter, they show they are willing to get closer to them in order to improve the relationship between youngsters and politics. In the professional school, they stress the need to bring politicians to schools:

> Clemente – *Politicians do not take the initiative of… for instance, 'let's go to that school and hear these students in a session/lecture'. If politicians cared about us, if we really mattered to them, they would take what we think into more consideration. If these kinds of sessions took place in a regular basis, like a cycle, everybody would win.*
>
> Rafael – *Yes, to organise lectures with politicians, themselves and us, talking, explaining things. Politicians should go to schools, face up, talk, explain things to us.*
>
> Maria – *They also have to listen to us.*
>
> Rafael – *To listen to what we have to say. Ask us 'what you all think is wrong?', and listen. Even if it took the whole day.*

In another focus group, this idea was also brought to the table. Rodrigo and Manuel argued that in some cases youngsters are interested in participating in politics but there is no trigger to make that interest happen. In other words, they don't find any space in which they could simply discuss political issues.

> Rodrigo – *There are youngsters to whom these themes matter but there is no one to take them to the next level… I don't know how to explain… if someone could come here, to school…*
>
> Manuel – *What lacks is what is happening now.*
>
> Carla Malafaia – What is happening now?
>
> Manuel – *This. What we are doing now.*
>
> Rodrigo – *Debates of this sort.*

Bruno, who has participated in the young people's parliament[43], adds that youngsters should be part of the Government, suggesting that more governmental seats should be guaranteed for young people, so their stances could be taken into consideration. In the

[43] An institutional initiative of the Portuguese National Parliament, the 'Young People's Parliament' is a programme that runs throughout the academic year and includes schools from all over the country that wish to participate. It encompasses the elementary and the secondary levels and ends with sessions in the Parliament for those students who accomplished to be elected throughout all phases.

same vein, a 23-year-old girl interviewed by someone from the religious group, argued that the Portuguese democracy needs to be renewed, and stressed that it needs to motivate youngsters in order to bring them to Government, where they can "contribute with new ideas and principles to run the country".

In the previous section, we presented the youngsters' opinions regarding the nature of contemporary political debate and the problem of the lack of appropriate information which hinders their political interest. Thus, political literacy was addressed by all participants as an important element for promoting youngsters' interest in politics. As already stated by some of them, the political world is not youth-friendly, either because the ballot paper presents a number of political parties about which there is not enough information, or because the political information at the youngsters' disposal is too confusing. In this vein, João is not alone in considering that the item that should have scored higher on the obstacles to participation (pictured in the leaflet) was the educational level, judged in terms of political education.

João – *There should be someone who could explain these sorts of things to us.*

Cátia – *Lack of information, that is the main problem*.

João – *The ballot paper had thirty-five parties on it and we should know what is claimed by each one, so we can start defining what we want.*

Catia – *First of all, I think people should be taught at school about politics.*

Henrique – *That is right! That is the first issue.*

Cátia – *Much more about politics. For example, I would like that someone taught me at school, impartially… because it is impossible to talk about this with my parents… Impossible. They are always saying that some John Doe is lazy and some other John Doe is a fascist, and so on. So, I would like to have someone, impartial, who could explain us, like 'look, you have this and that party… this emerged in the French Revolution, etc. etc.' I research some things on my own, but for example I cannot get access to each political party, there are some things that I don't understand very well. For example, I visited Bloco de Esquerda's website and what was there was 'vote for Bloco' and bla bla. It doesn't explain the basis, the ideology.*

Henrique – *In what regards education about political parties, if we can call it this way, there is none. And I really would like to have some education about political parties. Even if I research on the internet, it is not easy, the websites are all like 'vote, vote, vote', 'we will do this and that', but nothing is clear. Plus, I would say that we should foster and motivate the critical spirit, like 'why is this?', 'why we do keep on like this?'.*

Carla Malafaia – So you all think that youngsters should have the basic knowledge and tools so they can decide.

Henrique – *Yes, the basic tools.*

João – *So they can decide when they vote, but also so that they can, for example, watch a debate and, at least, know what is at stake, what issues are being discussed.*

A 16-year-old girl, interviewed by a participant from the arts group, also stated the need for young people to have critical thinking competences in order to avoid the pitfalls of inertia. This lack of proper information is confirmed by all participants, alongside statements about the biased role of the family as a political socialisation agent. For instance, Carlos said that the family can actually be a bad influence regarding vote, once the parents' political preferences often lead young people to vote "just following the family's political colour". Therefore, the onus is placed on the school as an educational institution that supposedly conveys impartial information upon which youngsters can rely on. In this train of thought, João suggests that politics should be a subject in all schools.

> João – *There should be a discipline about politics at school. For example, my sister just turned 18 and she can't even tell the difference between the left and the right. I think it is essential to start instilling all this in schools… teach what is the left and what is the right, what is the political centre, what this and that political party do…*
> Henrique – *I totally agree!*

An intentional educational arena to promote political literacy is a transversal request made by these youngsters. They identify the school as the most appropriate context not only to convey information about political issues, but also to practice some skills they value for political development.

> João – *I think that in school we could debate each one's ideas among ourselves. That would be a good way to know what everyone thinks and start understanding basic political issues.*
> Lara – *When some youngster hears political talk, at home for instance, he/she will want to run away because it seems like a very specific thing for a restricted number of people…*
> Ricardo – *Even in the newspapers, when I read the political news, they give us very specific information. I often feel that news are meant to be read by someone who already understands about that, who is familiarised with an entire political and partisan conceptual framework…*
> Maria – *Yes. And then young people see politics as a negative thing… well, most of them.*
> João – *Even in a political debate on TV, lots of people would find it hard to understand what they are talking about.*

An 18-year-old girl, interviewed by a participant from the arts school, stressed that the Government doesn't care about people, going as far as suggesting that "it is convenient for the Government that we are ignorant". So, she said, young people need to get united and claim for their rights. Another interviewee (a 17-year-old boy) said that the "Government cares about numbers, not people", adding that politicians "are turning democracy into a liberal dictatorship". Osvaldo, from the rural village, also highlighted

the need for ‘political education’. He quoted an 11th-grade boy whose speech was used in the leaflet, saying that he agreed with that boy when he said that ‘the future will rely on political education’. Osvaldo also stressed the need to uncomplicate politics, likewise the other focus groups participants:

> *We should have a political system less complicated to understand. In other words, we should have politicians speaking to the people. If a politician talks, perhaps most people here will only understand half of it, because the words are too complicated, and only those who go to University will have the knowledge to get it.*

In this section, participants pointed out some of the main problems affecting the Portuguese Government (e.g., its dependence on the EU, the corruption, the lack of responsiveness). Also, they put forward some suggestions regarding the political system (e.g., regionalisation, ensuring that youngsters have seats in Government) and how the relationship between young people and politics could be improved. The young participants expressed their willingness to have schools as more politicised contexts, capable of fostering political literacy, developing political competences and bringing politicians closer to youngsters. They also argue that the contrast between the period before and after the transition to democracy reveals the need for a more politicised society.

3.5. Putting the pieces together: the points youngsters make

Like the quantitative study, the results of the focus groups begin by showing some ambiguous and contrasting positions regarding participation. Both demonstrations and voting are considered important forms of participation, even if in the perspective of some participants they are not effective in bringing about social change. Nonetheless, some of the discourses show clearly that certain positions have deeper roots and are framed by broader narratives. For example, at the same time that participants stress the importance of voting – some participants even criticise their peers who do not vote and assert its importance in legitimising the involvement in protests – they say that young people do not vote and vote changes nothing. One of the participants stated that youngsters are turning away from the kind of "politics related to political parties", and are instead more interested in forms of participation closer to their concerns, such as demonstrations; this same person asserted the need to know more about partisan politics and the importance of voting. Throughout the focus groups, it is possible to understand that some positions are not static and, in fact, may be just the tip of the iceberg in what concerns the relationship between young people and politics. So, what is really at stake in youth engagement?

The first clue put forward by participants relates to how close something is to them. If a given issue makes sense for youngsters and directly concerns them, they will engage – this can mean either participating in a school-related protest or voting in the European elections. The "close to home" argument is not new (Eliasoph, 1998), but in this case it does not seem to be about avoiding the connections between local concerns and broader political issues; instead, such connections are often unclear to them. At the same time that participants always talked about youngsters' political disinterest, particularly regarding institutional politics, they showed interest and willingness to get to know better precisely this kind of politics. In listening to how youngsters talk about it, we begin to draw out the meanings of apparent contradictions, specifically regarding what they unveil about the relationship between youth and politics. To be sure, they ask for more proximity with politics. According to the young participants, this means more information, clearly conveyed, in a language and style they can understand, and a parallel increase in the information about contexts and modes of participation, in order to democratise access to politics. The emphasis on political literacy and the creation of mechanisms capable of making the youngsters' voice heard accounts for the risk of "political poverty" (Bohman, 1997). In other words, the fact that they feel they are not

politically equipped (in terms of communicative and cognitive abilities) to participate in the political discussion, excludes them from effectively participating in the democratic process.

Secondly, young people's discourses about civic and political participation point to another important element to understand and address youth political involvement: the need for a generalised (public and private) recognition of their political agency. This clue emerged through the explicit statements about how they feel excluded every time some sort of political talk takes place, but also through the fact that youngsters themselves often reproduce the general idea they complain about: that youngsters are politically apathetic. To begin with, it was clear during the focus groups that their first, almost natural impetus, is to state that young people, in general, are not interested in politics and do not participate. For example, some participants found the high levels of youth volunteering rather odd, but at the same time they talked about their own experiences as volunteers. In fact, they displayed a considerable range of civic and political experiences. Additionally, when participants saw the graphic on youth political interest, all of them started by saying that young people are not interested in politics. Nevertheless, the majority of them showed themselves quite attentive to political issues. It seems clear, then, that one of the chief problems is the lack of opportunity and space to manifest their political interest. In fact, youngsters are reminded all the time that they are not legitimised – mainly if they are underage – to engage in political talk. The exception applies only to those who already have a job and future prospects (which, for youngsters, is kind of asking for the moon, these days). This adds another element to the aforementioned issue of recognition and legitimisation. In other words, the 'respectable economic independence' (Lister et al., 2003) bears a strong influence on how young people understand citizenship – this is in line with previous research with young people from both Portuguese and immigrant origin (Malafaia et al., 2012). Likewise, other studies have accounted for youngsters' perceptions of their relegation to the margins, when it comes to political issues, for being too immature and financially dependent (Smith, et al., 2005; Lister, 2007; Arnett, 2000). Therefore, the demand for recognition, necessary for political interest and participation, is more than urgent nowadays. The downplaying of political agency, by making it dependent of either financial stability or age, ultimately undermines the practice and legitimisation of democracy altogether. The fact that this kind of discourse is observable in the youngsters themselves, and the fact that both national and international research shows it, is seriously worrisome and, at the

same time, intriguing – how is this kind of imaginary being created and so well maintained?

The third unanimous assertion of young people – and another important clue to tackle youth participation – has to do with the lack of political education, taken as matter of political information, literacy and competences. In this vein, the role of important sources of influence is deconstructed as simultaneously important and detrimental to young people's civic and political participation. While family and teachers are mentioned concerning their motivating role on civic engagement, the media and the family are also pointed out as discouraging elements regarding political interest: either because the type of political content shown by the media is not easy to understand by young people or because they face judgemental and biased feedbacks every time they express political opinions within their families. Therefore, some sources of influence that might be relevant for the youth are actually not performing in pedagogical nor informative fashion. Furthermore, youngsters expressed their criticisms of the nature of political debate these days, and of how hard it is to get knowledgeable of political issues when they feel they cannot rely on some of their closest sources of influence, nor understand what is at stake when witnessing a given political debate, due to the unclear information conveyed. Consequently, the message they are getting is that the political world is an adult world, with an adult language and clouded by an adult bias. Young people seem to place their hopes in the school for closing the gap between them and politics. They seem to regard the school arena as a neutral political ground in which political competences and knowledge may be learned and developed. And they are, in fact, making a relevant point. The results of other studies stress the need for impartial political information, as the complexity of the political process – restricting participation to the most knowledgeable citizens – is recognised as an important obstacle to youth involvement, aggravated by the biased information often promoted by different agents with conflicting public interests (Deželan, 2015). In fact, the increasing importance of critical thinking to spot news that lack credibility or that, in some way, are biased, is a pressing issue nowadays. The role of academic institutions and online platforms as fact-checking mechanisms and channels to deliver impartial information about crucial public issues are pointed out as potential forms of addressing this problem (Ibid). Furthermore, given the socially established and widespread narratives revealed by the youth's discourses (e.g., back in the time of the dictatorship, the economy was better than it is today; some people who go to demonstrations do not vote), the demand for political education should, in fact, be more seriously considered. Distorted historical

and political facts are being disseminated and this, hand-in-hand with a context of crisis, may have dangerous consequences.

In what regards the political class, youngsters do not find politicians trustworthy, and they criticize their lack of responsiveness and the problem of political corruption, which consequently impacts on the relevance attributed to some forms of participation. Still, our results show that youngsters are clearly not apathetic; they just do not find their place into the sphere of the institutional politics because they feel it is not open to them. The official political rhetoric, focused on attracting and including young people – mainly during electoral campaigns – is filled more with political tokenism and paternalist messages than with a true willingness to political mobilisation and inclusion (Amnå & Ekman, 2015). Young people realise that. They feel they are instrumentalised by the political parties, as they just care about youth when they need active voters. However, asking for their vote on websites, without bothering to "explain the basis, the ideology" – as mentioned by one of the participants – is not enough. Indeed, "youth participation does not come cheap anymore" (Forbrig, 2005, p. 5). Politics needs to become a youth-friendly sphere and the discourses about political apathy need to be complexified, since not voting may well mean a decision about not taking a stance without owning the proper information to do it. Survey data, collected in the aftermath of the European elections, showed that young non-voters indicate the lack of interest in politics and the lack of necessary information as the main reasons for abstention (Public Opinion Monitoring Unit, 2014). Having youngsters talk about political issues adds density to these statistics, and suggests that their lack of interest may, in fact, be revealing their estrangement from politics, heightened by a lack of access to clear information, which in turn promotes disinterest – the cycle suggested by one of the participants. Contrariwise, when information about political issues is available, and available in a clear fashion, they get involved. The case of political consumerism may be an example of this. A study interviewing policy makers and stakeholders from six European countries highlights the importance of projects and programmes focused on how the political system works, on the promotion of youth participation in representative political bodies, on the establishment of dialogue and consultation venues that can impact the political agenda setting and a comprehensive definition of political participation (Deželan, 2015).These recommendations are in tune with what young participants suggested throughout the focus groups, calling attention to the risk that the mismatch between the youth's changing political imaginary and an anachronistic traditional politics might become irreparably sharp.

CHAPTER 4.

Politics lived in context: amplifying the particular

4.1. Methodological and socio-political framework: the Portuguese parliamentary elections and ethnography

4.1.1. Socio-political context

In October 2015, the Portuguese parliamentary elections unleashed an unprecedented political scenario in the country, breaking away from the cycle, begun in April 74, in which only three parties from the centre-left and the centre-right had ever been involved in governing the country. While the right-wing coalition (PSD-CDS) won the elections with 38.6% of the votes, it lost its previous outright majority. Two weeks after, the Socialist Party (PS), which had received 32.4% of the votes, managed to negotiate an historical alliance with the far-left parties to bring down the right-wing government and put an end to the 'austerity administration'. This pact that PS managed to seal with the radical Left Bloc (BE), the Communist party (PCP) and the Green party, towards a majority support in the parliament, was historical. PCP and BE agreed to put aside ideological barriers that had separated them from the mainstream parties. This was like "tearing down the last remain of a Berlin Wall", said the PS leader, António Costa[44]. These parties agreed to participate in an open negotiation towards a common government programme, aiming at a greater goal: to re-establish the social rights dismantled by the right-wing government over the past few years. The program presented in the Parliament reviewed the main austeritarian measures implemented during the bailout. The proposals aimed to restore public sector wages, increase social benefits, ease taxes, raise the minimum wage, and reverse privatisations already under way. This program intended to "turn the page on the austerity" and "break out of its current cycle of impoverishment" – according to the PS leader in an interview to the Financial Times[45].

At the same time, and although the PS leader stated the intention to remain committed to the country's' responsibility towards the EU, his opponents sounded the alarm about a potential collision with the European Union as a consequence of a socialist administration, also claiming the political illegitimacy of such a government. The Portuguese president, Cavaco Silva, facing the prospect of a government supported by parties (BE and PCP) that oppose to the Portuguese membership of NATO and favour a unilateral debt restructuring, addressed to the country in the national television,

[44] https://www.ft.com/content/6e1cf3b2-71c1-11e5-ad6d-f4ed76f0900a
[45] https://www.ft.com/content/6e1cf3b2-71c1-11e5-ad6d-f4ed76f0900a

highlighting what he considered to be harmful to the national interest. He referred to BE and PCP as a kind of second-class parties and stressed the danger of a Portuguese government being, for the first time, dependent on "anti-European forces"[46]. His discourse was severely criticised by the media, which accused him of being deeply ideological in alarming the Portuguese people about the possibility of a PS-lead government. Despite his speech, after a two-days debate over the programme presented by the PS, the rejection motion put forward by the left majority was approved in the Parliament and, thus, the PSD-CDS minority government was defeated. The government resigned and the president was left with no alternative but to appoint the PS leader as the new prime-minister.

Cavaco Silva was not allowed to call for new parliamentary elections because the National Parliament cannot be dissolved by the president during the last six months of his/her mandate, nor during the first six months after parliamentary elections have taken place. Still, these events created an unstable political environment and raised the expectations about the next Portuguese president. The parliamentary electoral campaign and the controversial president's reaction to the leftist alliance brought up an antagonistic political environment. In January 2016, Portugal's presidential elections took place and the centre-right candidate, university professor and former TV prime-time commentator, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, won with a remarkable victory (52% of the votes). Rebelo de Sousa, likewise his nearest rival, the left-wing university professor António Sampaio da Nóvoa, ran as an independent candidate. At this time, the new government had already dismantled some of the previous government's policies (e.g., national primary school exams and privatisation plans). The new president had always called for a consensus politics during the electoral campaign, emphasising the importance of different parties working together, thereby seeking to soften the intense political polarisation of this period. The expectations that the new president would dissolve the parliament and call for new elections (and the return to the right-wing policies) never materialised. In fact, Rebelo de Sousa adopted a quite conciliatory tone: "This election ends a very long election process that unnerved the country and divided a society already hurt by years of crisis. It is time to turn the page and de-traumatize, start

[46] http://economico.sapo.pt/noticias/leia-na-integra-o-discurso-de-cavaco-silva-sobre-a-formacao-do-governo_232487.html

an economic, social and political pacification", he said at the Faculty of Law of the University of Lisbon after he was elected[47].

4.1.2. The importance of political ethnography in studying the experience of participation, or being political on the methodological options

Research on civic and political participation has shown solid results about the quality of participation and its impact on civic knowledge and attitudes, inclusively demonstrating that participating more does not necessarily mean participating better, as "participation is not good in itself" (Ferreira et al., 2012, p. 608). This should be an important goal of social research: to look for impacts while studying processes. Still, the scholars that, over the past few years, have been focused on exploring the quality of participation and its effects, stress the need for further research on the role of youth life contexts in promoting political development through different methodological tools, namely qualitative methods (ibid.). To understand, from an insider perspective, how some youth participatory settings promote distinctive experiences for participants constitutes, then, a research gap that has already been pointed out, So, the imperative question is how can the very *experience of participation* be explored in context? In this regard, ethnography is well equipped to study a particular and crucial feature of participation: the experience itself as a relational, collective process. Political ethnography provides access to the set of contingent interactions among people and groups, enabling access to unfolding processes, causes and effects (Tilly, 2006, p. 410), bringing to the fore individuals' actions, meanings and perceptions, which are located in a particular political structure that influences them (Bayard de Volo & Schatz, 2004).

According to Wood, ethnography can lay bare the "micro-foundations of collective action" (Wood, 2003, p. 199). In their turn, such foundations are anchored in politics. The term *politics* derives from the Greek *politikos,* which refers broadly to matters related to citizens and the civic realm and is one of the defining arenas of the structures of meaning often called "culture" (Luhtakallio & Eliasoph, 2014). Interestingly, while ethnography might seem very apt for the study of politics, the truth is that - as shown by Auyero and Joseph (2007) -, politics has been largely absent from the contemporary ethnographic agenda. Wedeen (2010), discussing ethnographic work

[47] http://www.reuters.com/article/us-portugal-president-election-idUSKCN0V211E

in political science, makes her point by quoting Pachirat's (2009) statement at the Institute for Qualitative Multi-Method Research in Syracuse: "if we think of the range of research methods in political science as a big family, ethnography is clearly the youngest, somewhat spoiled, attention-seeking child" (p. 256). Political scientists have typically been resorting to quantitative rather than qualitative methods, to data collection strategies that offer one-off or intermittent static portraits rather than motion pictures of the social world, to formal statistical modelling rather than *Verstehen* applied to individuals and groups (Auyero & Joseph, 2007). In fact, despite the methodological range of studies on civic and political participation, ethnographic approaches are almost inexistent in research on political socialization, particularly in Europe. Javier Auyero (2006) called attention to this "*double absence*: of politics in ethnographic literature and of ethnography in studies of politics" (p. 258). The fact that "ethnography is generally underappreciated in academic political science" (Schatz, 2009, p. xi) inhibits the elaboration of dynamic and dense accounts of the broader picture captured by quantitative methods. Therefore, it can be argued that ethnography should be more used in studying civic and political participation, hand-in-hand with quantitative research. Indeed, political ethnography will potentially enable the development of a deep understanding of political thinking and political action: accessing agents' motivations to participation, the networks that define their possibilities and impossibilities of action, and the ways in which they integrate the broad social and political reality.

Departing from Weber's conceptualization of politics as a vocation, Mahler (2006, p. 283-284) stresses that, when studying political engagement, we need to develop methods capable of actually grasping "the experiential specifics of politics while recognizing the conditions that shape the possibility of those very experiences". And for that, he argues, researchers should remember and incorporate the Aristotelian notion of the human being as a political animal to the extent that, more than just rational calculations, the individual is a "living, breathing, suffering, sensual being" (Mahler, 2006, p. 281). The implications of this notion for the study of political socialization go beyond the individual's perceptions and actions, in the extent that it challenges the researcher to understand the linkages between the individual and the environment. Following Mahler, we believe that ethnography can help to better understand the pedagogical features of participation experiences: "by identifying what is at stake for agents in a given setting, we can begin to understand the character and quality of their experiences" (ibid., p. 292). By phenomenologically accounting for individuals' experiences, both from an inside standpoint and a distant analyst's perspective

(Wedeen, 2010), political ethnography can "microscopically" (Auyero, 2007) look at the relational dimension of participation to vivisect its experiential details, enabling an embedded and embodied analysis of politics-in-action (Mahler, 2006, p. 291). In fact, adding density to this research field may be achieved by gaining a deeper knowledge of the participatory contexts, complementing the focus on individuals that has characterised the studies on quality of participation (Azevedo, 2009; Ferreira et al., 2012). This complementarity enables better understanding the 'pedagogical' elements of experiences associated to the development of relevant cognitive processes both at school and in the practice of citizenship. By taking the experience of participation as the main unit of analysis, we also aimed to contribute to strengthening the ethnographic method in the field of civic and political participation, as it enables capturing "the pace of political action, the texture of political life, and the plight of political actors", often shadowed by an exclusive reliance on quantitative methods (Auyero, 2006, p. 258).

4.1.3. Methodological considerations: settings, field entry and ethnographic caveats

The recognition that political development is fundamentally a relational process framed by contextual dynamics propels us to get closer to participation, studying it in an ethnographic way, that is, "at a smaller scale and as [it] really happen[s]" (Baiocchi & Connor, 2008, p. 140). Therefore, departing from a broader understanding of participation (its levels, patterns and effects), based on the self-report evaluations of the developmental quality of civic and political experiences, we now seek to amplify the particular by moving into the actual contexts of participation. The survey results showed that political movements/parties and volunteering organizations/groups stood out as contexts promoting the quality of participation, considering participants' involvement for more than 6 months (see section 2.2.). The focus groups also supported the relevant role of volunteering, and while suggesting that the relationship with institutional politics is ambiguous and tensional, youngsters showed their willingness to get closer to this 'world'. A youth wing of a political party and a youth NGO were, then, the contexts chosen to carry out our ethnographic work. After this broader decision was made, we started to narrow a bit more toward some specific criteria. Regarding the youth wing, one of the most representative (with more militants) in the country was contacted; in what regards volunteering, we opted for an organisation with a considerable number of

youngsters, in growing expansion and with plenty of social visibility. We selected a Non-Governmental Organization for Development (NGOD) in Porto that promotes youth volunteering, dedicated to social work with different vulnerable groups, and the youth branch of one of the mainstream parties in Portugal, with an increasing number of members in the recent years. We believe that the different nature of these two contexts enables accessing different ways of living and doing politics.

Doing ethnography on civic and political participation can be quite challenging, particularly when the time to conduct it is limited. Trying to define clearly what we wanted to know with the fieldwork was useful in this regard. What happens inside the participatory contexts and how distinct modes of living and doing politics acquire meaning for youth was, then, the main purpose of this research phase (*Research Question VI*). Specifically, we began fieldwork aiming to grasp I) how participants understand their practices and perceive their roles within the participatory contexts; II) to what extent the experience of participation may go beyond the time and space of the participatory contexts; III) and in what terms youngsters project social change in collective ways of doing politics. In sum, meaning-making, living and imagining (civic and political participation) were the guiding notions for the beginning of the ethnographies. Anticipating the inebriating nature of the unpredictability and the challenges of the limited time available (6 months for each context), the intention of these guidelines was to steer the research while, at the same time, avoiding constraining its scope.

Formal and informal contacts were made with the youth wing and the NGO to get the respective research authorizations. Concerning the youth wing, we started as soon as we got the authorisation from the first person we contacted (at that time, the president of the local structure of this youth wing in Porto), who suggested us to kick off the fieldwork by going to the youth wing summer camp, in mid-August. This event takes place every two years and is one of the most important for youth wing members. Besides a conferences' program scheduled for the week (with important party's representatives), this is an opportunity for all members of the country to be together for one week, getting to know each other, fine-tuning local and regional decisions, discussing politics and having fun. In 2015, this event also marked the beginning of the electoral campaign for the parliamentary election, symbolically kicked off by the speech of the general-secretary of the party in the last day of the summer camp. With a sleeping bag and a backpack, the ethnographer began the fieldwork by spending the entire week in the camp. It was intense and quite useful to get embedded in the youth wing spirit, as

well as to speed up the process of creating a network, once the ethnographer had the chance to be with the national leader, present the research and get closer to the members of the Porto district – who she did not know at that time but with whom she intended to be for the rest of the ethnography. The electoral campaign was beginning, and therefore the young wing was about to start a rather unusually active period. The researcher had the opportunity to take part in it by joining the district campaigning caravan in the following months, as well as the youth wing's meetings and activities, the local youth wing elections and the district Convention.

Likewise the youth wing, the NGO was contacted by e-mail, in which we succinctly explained the research. Then, a meeting was scheduled with a member of the direction board of the organisation to better explain the goals of this ethnography. In this meeting, we came to know the strings attached to conducting the fieldwork: the ethnographer would have to commit to a full year of volunteering; in other words, to be involved in every activity, to be attached to a project, and to comply with the weekly volunteering. Basically, the request was that the ethnographer behaved just like any other volunteer, avoiding disruption in the normal routines of the organisation. Contacts with both the youth wing and the NGO were made at the same time, but the ethnographies followed each field's specific timings. In the case of the youth wing, the fieldwork started in August 2015, getting on track with the imminent electoral campaign, and as such it turned out to be a perfect timing for this research. In the case of the NGO, we followed the regular procedure just like any other volunteer: in September 2015 (the beginning of the school year) we enrolled in the organisation, attended the initial sessions (dedicated to present the organisation and its projects) and signed up for three volunteering projects. After a couple of weeks, the ethnographer was notified about the project for the weekly volunteering she had been allocated to: an institution for mentally disabled people. Alongside the weekly volunteering, the ethnographer participated in the organisation meetings (occurring in a fortnightly basis), the out-of-town weekends (every three months), the fundraising activities (about once per month), and the holidays' parties for the beneficiaries[48].

Ethnography is usually supported by other methods, especially interviews. First, because additional data in which people offer us direct and 'unequivocal' answers to either corroborate or reject the interpretations we built during the fieldwork, are unarguably useful. Second, nowadays, science hardly aligns with the long, extensive periods of fieldwork that, at some point, every ethnographer looked forward to develop

[48] More detail information about the settings will be provided in sections 4.2 and 4.3.

– soon realising that Malinowski's kind of work (1922) is mostly inspirational. Today, only a few lucky and well-funded ethnographers can afford to go through such an experience. Still, and despite the short period in fields, we relied on ethnography's most pivotal technique of gathering data, participant observation, which entails "close-up, on-the-ground observation of people and institutions in real time and space, in which the investigator embeds herself near (or within) the phenomenon so as to detect how and why agents on the scene act, think and feel the way they do" (Wacquant, 2003, p. 5). If ethnography is a lot about getting answers without making questions (Costa, 1986), we have chosen to rely on it all the way, keeping in mind why we decided to do ethnography in the first place. We were seeking to minimally disrupt the natural flow of the contextual dynamics, in order to observe, the more genuinely possible, the experiences of participation in those settings, as they 'naturally' happen. To be sure, the goal was to potentiate immersion in the context, and not to record a given speech framed by a questions-answers format – which would impact the interaction between the interviewees and the ethnographer in the field. The effort to focus our observation on specific research questions was meant to foster vigilance throughout the fieldwork by trying to double-check the data that was emerging from the fieldnotes, paying additional attention to some of the issues that began to be drawn as potentially relevant results. The fieldnotes were written on a regular basis and were our main recording device. We believe that the exclusiveness of participant observation enabled us to make the best of the time in the field: that is, to 'afford' to 'just' being there, observing and participating, seeking a "thick description" of the groups when writing the fieldnotes (Geertz 1993). Thus, while we were aware of the "generative power of the field work" (Neves, 2008, p. 55), we also tried to define what we were looking for.

4.1.4. Being an ethnographer, doing ethnography: leveraging or deceiving?

In discussing ethnographic research, Geertz (1993) wrote that it consists of a personal experience that is about "finding our feet, an unnerving business which never more than distantly succeeds" (p. 13). The cultural gap separating the ethnographer from the other human beings he/she observes often requires an ongoing and never-ending work to get closer to different ways of living and interpreting the world. To be sure, in such a difficult work of trying to find our feet with the 'Others', "the ethnographer will not emerge unscathed from the experience he/she lived" (Fernandes, 2003, p. 24). Geertz stated that

> We are not, or at least I am not, seeking either to become natives or to mimic them. Only romantics or spies seem to find point in that. We are seeking, in the widened sense of the term in which it encompasses very much more than talk, to converse with them, a matter a great deal more difficult, and not only with strangers, than is commonly recognized (1993, p. 13)

Doing ethnography is, then, challenging in multiple ways, and, at some point, it will raise potential paradoxes to the ethnographer. We try to be both immersive and distant in order to be able to reach deep knowledge while avoiding the pitfalls of familiarity. We aim to show the actors how grateful we are for them allowing such an intrusion by showing reciprocity, and yet we know from the beginning how unequal such relationship will always be. While trying to be reciprocal, making ourselves useful in the context, we also know that, to a great extent, we are making people look at us in a trustworthy light so we can get access to deeper information. How to come to grips with such contradictions and subsequent discomforts? How to get leverage without deceiving the ones who trusted us? We believe that, first and foremost, by accounting for such contradictions and discomforts.

Firstly, we should clarify from where we observed; that is, the standpoint and context that situated the production of knowledge (Haraway, 1988), as the researcher's baggage in terms of his/her set of experiences, beliefs and interests "must be placed within the frame of the picture that she/he attempts to paint" (Harding, 1987, p. 9). The ethnographer, a 26-year-old girl, conducted the fieldwork in two different settings, composed of different people: the majority of volunteers in the NGO were girls (aged between 18 and 26 years old), while the youth wing militants were mostly boys (although the militants with whom the ethnographer interacted more were between 19 and 27 years old, the age range in youth wing was 14-30 years old). The fact that the ethnographer was virtually the same age as many wing members and volunteers helped to smooth the impression management efforts. Furthermore, while she has never been affiliated with any political party, she was ideologically close to this wing. However, in the youth wing members' eyes, this turned the ethnographer into a potential militant in the future, and this demanded additional care to avoid predatory opportunism on the members' willingness to welcome her (Neves & Malafaia, 2016). In what regards the NGO, she had had past experiences of volunteering (although in a smaller, local association) which enabled her to address some of the issues discussed in the meetings. It can be said that the ethnographer's background helped her in the integration. Still, this process was quite different in both settings, in unexpected ways. The following excerpts from the fieldnotes

are related, respectively, to one of the NGO meetings, and to the week of the youth wing summer camp.

> "the meeting started 30 minutes late. The volunteers started arriving. Everyone was super excited. I sat down waiting for the meeting to start. I was looking around and becoming conscious that I was the only one who was not really integrated, who was not chatting to anyone. (January 20th)"

> "When I returned to my tent, and before fell asleep, I thought about how much that group was integrating me, that it was much easier than I had anticipated. Everyone talks to me without relevant distrust, in a rather spontaneous and natural fashion. They enlighten me about acronyms, the way the structure is organised, they enlighten me about the [youth wing] of today and from the past, they state their opinions about some people, tell me more or less controversial things about the [youth wing]. They have been very helpful, even introducing me to some people they consider that could be useful as gatekeepers for my study. (August 27th)"

The purpose of the study and the ethnographer's role were clarified from the beginning of the fieldworks. We agree that "it is certainly a mistake to assume that ethnographic fieldwork can ever be fully open and overt, with all the relevant participants giving their continued support based on a consistent understanding of the research" (Lugosi, 2006, p. 544). Yet, we believe that clarifying the researcher's role was essential for an ethically sound research. While in the youth wing the word was spread among the members, in the NGO the ethnographer actually had to insist with the board to inform other volunteers about the study. In the youth wing, knowing about the ethnography resulted in treating the ethnographer either as a kind of external advisor or a potential future militant who had the chance of experiencing how cool the youth wing was. In the NGO, disclosing the ethnography was almost irrelevant; in fact, it was not a conversation topic at all. Nobody wanted to know about the research and continued to treat the ethnographer as a common volunteer. The absence of reactions was surprising. In fact, contrary to the youth wing, it was not like this NGO needed to attract more participants, as they have plenty of volunteers enrolling every year. They always showed confidence in their work, and they regard it as praiseworthy and truthful enough to convince new volunteers.

The diverse reactions to the ethnography inevitably influence its course. No ethnographer gets the fieldwork running smoothly without putting a good deal of effort in managing the impression caused on the actors in the scene; it depends on "the work of successfully staging a character" (Goffman, 1993, p. 245). In the case of the NGO, after the ethnographer informed the volunteers with whom she interacted more often about the research, she had to prove that she was there, like any other volunteer, demonstrating her involvement in the scene. The immersive nature of ethnography entails a constant effort to make us trustworthy, to naturalise our presence, ultimately, to make participants bracket our main intention: to know how it feels to be in their shoes and how things happen the way they

do, so we can take notes about it. That is also the reason why they do not (clearly) see us as researchers. This move towards the naturalisation of the ethnographer's presence in the field makes it possible to have access to minute, apparently insignificant, things.

> "The intensity of the contact, the inexistence of temporal frontiers between *being* in the context and *leaving* it, makes the writing task a difficult one. The non-stop fieldwork, for several days in a row, is demanding. And if there is something I learned is that every information is relevant (either to be written down or to facilitate my familiarisation with a certain kind of language) and transmitted every time, mostly in informal moments: during the morning coffee, in the queue for the bathroom, at night while dancing. The writing task is not easy, then – lots of notes are being sketched at 2 or 3am, inside my tent, by the light of the mobile phone." (August 28th)

This note was written during the summer camp, at the beginning of the ethnography in the youth wing. Whole new things were presented to the ethnographer – ways of talking, common imaginaries, shared assumptions, organisational information, etc. Writing the fieldnotes alone, with no one watching, prevents participants from actually seeing how ethnography works. They knew the ethnographer wrote notes, but they did not have to know how often and detailed they were. Reminding them about the research might create a dissonance from the friendly, helpful, good listener and low profile girl I was trying to be. Ethnographers strive to maintain the character they are staging. This is part and parcel of getting "near (or within) the phenomenon so as to detect how and why agents on the scene act, think and feel the way they do" (Wacquant, 2003, p. 5). The real challenge in what comes to impression management is to find the balance between keeping us in the game and preserving the respect we owe to the participants. In one of the NGO's activities, in which every volunteer should share how he/she was feeling in the organisation, the ethnographer was the last person to talk. After hearing the enthusiastic and emotional statements of the other volunteers, she could not avoid thinking that if she were to be completely honest in her statement, it would stop the other volunteers from keep telling her things about how they were living the volunteering, which was the main goal of the ethnography. Thus, she didn't lie but she also did not clarify her dissension in relation to the group. Instead, she redirected the talk to what she could say with truth.

> "I had to say some words too. I talked about the challenge of doing volunteering in the [institution for mentally disabled people] and that, step by step, I was being able to adapt better. At this moment, I actually like to go there every Tuesday morning, I feel that I relearn the meaning of simplicity, and such relearning brings me strength. My share was limited to this experience in the institution because it was the subject that I felt I could speak about truthfully. About my involvement in ToGod, I just said that, unlike most people there, I couldn't say that I felt ToGod as a family of my own." (February 27th)

Although the researcher already had some experience in conducting ethnography with young people, one of the main new challenges had to do with the periods of intensive fieldwork, of several days non-stop. We should make no mistake, though: these periods were absolutely crucial in getting closer to the phenomenon, in identifying the main actors in the field, in inscribing our presence and in mingling in the scenario. In sum, to acquire the ability to act *as if* we belonged in (Goffman, 1993). Reflexivity and vigilance over our role and performance is, then, of utter importance, since ethnography can easily slip from impression management to a predatory stance. Neves and Malafaia (2016) address this risk by raising the following questions:

> "how does the ethnographer prevent impression management from translating into opportunistic performance when it comes to seizing opportunities to obtain rich and privileged knowledge? How can this happen when it is the adaptive, chameleonic identity of ethnographer that allows him/her to be positively evaluated by research participants, to be accepted in the research setting, and to gain access to its deepest layers?" (p. 53)

As soon as the ethnographer started the fieldwork in the youth wing, she realised how much they distrusted the media, blaming them for conveying fake news and always working with a hidden political agenda that could be carried out by distorting facts. During the summer camp, the ethnographer witnessed some militants being interviewed and how their political statement was intentionally ignored by the journalists, who insisted in questions about their nocturnal parties. Still, at end of the first week, she could not keep from asking herself:

> "In the tent, by myself, I was a making a balance of this week that is now ending. I was glad for the way everyone welcomed me, for the trust I felt. But when I closed my eyes an interrogation crossed my mind: am I so different from that journalist that was walking around the camp, clearly with a special attention to grab any controversial facts or events that he could report?" (August 29th)

Accepting that perhaps only seldom does the ethnographer manage his/her relationships in the field with detachment (in research terms) is a step towards getting things real, in order to be fit to reflect about it and, even so, trying to be reciprocal in those relationships. When one of the participants asked the ethnographer to get involved in the campaign, she had second thoughts. A request for doing street campaign was that kind of situation in which the ethnographer remembered how important it is to return the favour of being allowed to be there, especially because nothing repays such favour. But this situation was not just about that, it was a test to assess the trust that was being invested in the relationship with her. Her ideological position, close to the wing, had been clarified for the youth wing members when

they directly asked her about it at the beginning of the ethnography. Therefore, it was not too complicated to address the request, but it was something that was not quite in the plans. Yet, the ethnographer felt she could not refuse.

> "It was 1am when we arrived in Paredes, where a popular party was going on as part of the campaign program. Chico began to distribute the pamphlets listing the political measures proposed by the wing.
> - Today I want to see you talking with people, doing campaign –Chico told me, challenging me.
> - All right – I replied.
> I am in [the youth wing] to understand this participation experience and, thus, I am here to do whatever they do, to go wherever they go, to see whatever they see. However, in the street campaign I do not talk to the people, I just hand them the leaflets while the [youth wing] members do all the talk. On the one hand, because I am interested in seeing the participants in that role, to follow their discourses, the way they interact with people and do campaign. On the other hand, doing campaign would be notoriously unnatural and, in some way, dishonest, and unnecessary given my good integration here. Yet, I accepted Chico's request and I followed his lead. I think he tried to include me as much as possible in the [youth wing]. It would have been step behind to say no." (September 26th)

While this was a way for the ethnographer to keep managing the impression and showed some reciprocity in the relationship with the participants, it was also a moment in which the ethnographer questioned the limits of what she could and could not do. In fact, the more the ethnographer felt the participants were giving her access to privileged information and moments, the more she felt obliged to be reciprocal. To be sure, the ethnographer always tried to be useful: cleaning rooms, transporting activities' materials, rallying in the youth wing, organising parties for the beneficiaries in the NGO, etc. These are the easier and peaceful ways to address reciprocity. However, and even if we declined the requests for direct participation – for instance, by taking sides in meetings in which important political decisions were being discussed – the episode above shows how difficult it can be to observe and participate, without direct impact, when we feel that declining a request can undermine reciprocity and impression management altogether. In fact, the acts of reciprocity, besides helping building rapport, may also provide important insights (Baiocchi et al., 2014). The campaigning episode, for example, ended up with Chico explaining to the ethnographer how they believe the campaign should be done, and we came to understand that, for them, it meant a privileged moment of political education that is often undervalued and instrumentalized by the political party.

In the NGO, doing ethnography about the volunteering experience entailed actually doing volunteer work in a context indicated by our gatekeeper. The truth is that the institutions for mentally disabled people would never be ethnographer's first option if she was doing volunteering unattached to the research. She never felt the urge to work with mentally disabled people, nor did she have any experience in this regard. Nevertheless, that was the NGO's call, and the ethnographer had to show good will and respect since they had agreed

with the ethnography in the first place. This meant, however, the confrontation of the ethnographer with her own fears and limitations as a person.

> "In the first visit to the institution, every volunteer assigned to that project was there. As we entered each room, the institution's director presented us to the beneficiaries. Several of them came to us, hugging us, touching us, they wanted to know us. The older volunteers showed clearly their experience: they were reacting pretty naturally to those unpredictable behaviours, and approaching the shyer beneficiaries. We, the first-year volunteers, didn't move. Some first-year volunteers were a bit afraid, but the majority of them were happy to promote a good moment for these people, even if it was mainly due to the curiosity of knowing new people. I confess: I was scared. I felt myself sweating, I was most afraid that the rest of the people realised how scared I was. I didn't feel comfortable but I was making a huge effort to keep it from being noticed. I was afraid I was projecting my fear and that, acting like a mirror to the beneficiaries, potentiating a confrontation with non-normativity. I was afraid that I could not do anything positive and useful during the weekly volunteering." (November 20th)

The researcher is always the main research instrument when it comes to ethnography. Thus, the ethnographer and the non-ethnographer are trapped in the same body. It can be emotionally quite demanding and, as highlighted by Whyte (1993), while the ethnographer needs to manage to live and interact with other people in the field, he/she also needs to continue to live with him/herself after the research is over. The ethnographer needs to respond to the field's unpredictability and in parallel has to deal with his/her own issues and subjectivities. The next two examples portray the ethnographer's emotional confrontations with herself under different lights. In the NGO, the somewhat mystical environment around that particular form of sensing volunteering often intrigued the ethnographer and made her felt like an alien. Against the odds, the type of setting with which she had never any contact before, the youth wing of a political party, demanded an additional effort to be detached.

> "After the [party's candidate]'s speech, Chico grabbed my hand and pulled me to the stand where the [party] and [youth wing] militants were, right behind the stage for the speakers. "Climb up here", Chico told me. I went up. The visual range increases and one gets the feeling of being in the shoes of the candidate or another speaker: the audience is standing up, clapping fervently, hundreds of flags waving. It is an overwhelming sensation. "It is amazing, right?", Chico asked. "Yes, it is". It was interesting to experience how much the emotion and the sense of union for a common cause are, indeed, contagious. (…) To me, as an ethnographer, but also as a young researcher in a context of precariousness and unpredictability, with a brother who had recently emigrated, I kind of felt part of that common voice and collective feeling." (September 30th)

> "During Joana's sharing moment she even cried, saying that she was feeling a bad person for being a bit off during some moments. This astonished me. The truth is that sometimes I almost question myself too, facing an environment of such kindness. One gets the feeling of being surrounded by intrinsically good people. Paradoxically, a kindness, generosity and tolerance that overwhelms us and makes us feel small." (January 30th)

"The interaction with individuals and groups, in successive events in the everyday, demands patience, resistance to frustration and self-commitment" (Neves, 2008, p. 48).

Throughout this long pathway, when we are challenged by the contact with different ways of feeling the world, we may begin to analyse ourselves in the middle of the fieldwork. Avoiding the colonisation of the ethnographer by the field and preserving the 'anthropological strangeness' entails a continuous reflexive process. Since ethnography involves continually ongoing negotiations and adjustments, there are no perfect solutions for the ethical quandaries involved; yet, dealing with them in a responsible, reflexive and context-sensitive manner requires the pursuit of ethical betterment and being humble to accept that perhaps ethnography will drive us to situations for which there are no optimal solutions (Neves & Malafaia, 2016). While in both fields the ethnographer was in a reasonable position to gain inside knowledge, since she could easily fit in both the volunteers' and militants' profiles (being young, a university student, ideologically close to the wing and with previous volunteering experience), the apparent leveraging position may also have resulted in deceiving the participants' expectations. First, because she *actually* ended up leaving the field; and second, after leaving the field she should get prepared for participants to feel betrayed when reading the depictions of themselves, mostly when they were not portrayed in a good light (Lugosi, 2006). About this, it should be said that all participants in the research have received the articles we will presented next. All of them acknowledged and thanked the reception, but only one participant offered feedback, stating that he had enjoyed reading what he called a 'technical-sociological-anthropological' account of the youth wing.

4.2. Living and doings politics in a youth political party

The following section [Article 4] will focus on describing how the members of a youth wing live and do politics – e.g., the choices they make, the principles around which they organise, the strategies they employ – and what they learn from it, discussing why such a setting may promote quality of participation. Thus, this paper is about the meaning-making of being involved in this setting during a particularly vibrant political period, and the learning processes that take place while participating.

4.2.1. **Living, doing and learning from politics in a youth wing of a political party**

Malafaia, Carla; Menezes, Isabel & Neves, Tiago (submitted). Living, doing and learning from politics in a youth wing of a political party. *The Qualitative Report* [Impact factor: 0.23]

Abstract

The field of civic and political participation has been studied mostly from individual, psychological approaches rather than collective, relational perspectives. Here we seek to address this gap in the literature. We do so through a political ethnography conducted in the youth wing of a major Portuguese political party. Fieldwork was carried out during fervent months right before and after the Portuguese parliamentary elections of October 2015, which brought to an end the right-wing coalition that had been ruling in austeritarian fashion for the previous 4 years. Investigating the meaning-making of doing politics in real-life contexts, we assess the collective learning processes involved in political participation. This paper shows that youth wings can provide quality participation experiences, and do not fit easily into the negative stereotypes recurrently associated with them. Indeed, collectively envisioning and constructing a more democratic society and working for the public good are guiding principles of the wing. *Debatement politics* and *pedagogical politics* thus play a fundamental role in the wing's activity, even if they are accompanied by the more mundane, festive *party politics* and the not so virtuous *backstage politics*. Through their activity, the wing's members acquire and display high levels of political efficacy, critical thinking and effort regulation regarding political involvement. Methodologically, this paper shows that ethnography is well equipped to study the experience of participation, foregrounding activities and perceptions of wing's members in order to make sense of their learning processes and outcomes.

Keywords: Civic and Political Participation - Youth Wings - Political Ethnography – Learning

Introduction

The broad field of civic and political participation has been studied mostly from individual, psychological approaches rather than collective, relational perspectives. In addition, and in articulation with this, quantitative methods have been used more widely than qualitative ones. This paper seeks to address this gap in the research literature. It does so through the use of political ethnography, which we believe can contribute to grasping the nitty-gritty of political experiences and political socialization, promoting the dialogue between the individual effects (cognitive, psychological, motivational) of such experiences – as revealed by political scientists and political psychologists –, and the group, relational dimension of such experiences. Indeed, through due consideration of the collective pedagogical processes – people learning by doing things together – involved in political participation, ethnography can closely investigate the meaning-making of doing politics in real-life contexts, as it unfolds through time and space (Auyero, 2006; Baiocchi & Connor, 2008; Schatz, 2009).

In order to fulfill these aims we conducted an ethnographic study, spanning 6 months, in the youth wing of a major Portuguese political party, in the wake of previous research that identified youth wings as contexts that promote quality participation experiences. Fieldwork was conducted during the fervent months right before and after the Portuguese parliamentary elections of October 4, 2015. These elections led to the deposition of the right-wing coalition that – with the assistance and supervision of a Troika composed of the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Commission – had been governing the country in austeritarian fashion during the previous 4 years. During those 4 years, the Portuguese people experienced severe hardship, rising unemployment leading to massive emigration, and a general decline in the quality of life. Movements and rallies surfaced in Portugal which echoed similar events elsewhere, such as the *Indignados* in Spain, or the *Occupy Wall Street* in the United States. Then, from the aforementioned elections emerged, in the 41-year old Portuguese democracy, an unprecedented left-wing government led by the Socialist Party with parliamentary support from both the Communist Party and a New Left party (*Bloco de Esquerda*). This led the Financial Times to state that the leader of the Socialist Party "bridged 40 years of ideological schisms to forge a new leftwing alliance"[49]. This happened because while the right-wing coalition got more votes, they

[49] "Left-wing alliance set to topple Portugal's government", Financial Times, November 8th, 2015:

were not enough to have majority in the parliament. Interestingly, the exact same situation happened in Spain just a couple of months after, where the right-wing was also more voted but unable to achieve a parliamentary majority, thereby opening the door to negotiations.

Our study shows that youth wings can provide quality participation experiences. Indeed, working for the public good is a guiding principle rather than a mere façade, and it may even involve direct confrontation between the wing and the parent party. The fact that *debatement politics* and *pedagogical politics* play a fundamental role in the wing's activity is a testimony of this: they strive on negotiating individual and collective meanings of public good, in a process envisioning what is a better political and social world, and they gather efforts to work towards such scenario – what Baiocchi, Bennett, Cordner, Klein and Savell (2014) call "civic imagination". Nevertheless, these two modes of political activity are accompanied by the more mundane and festive *party politics* and the not so virtuous *backstage politics*. Put together, however, these different modes of doing politics concur to wing members acquiring and displaying high levels of political efficacy, critical thinking and effort regulation regarding political involvement. Finally, and importantly, this research makes clear the usefulness of ethnography in bridging individual and collective levels of analysis, in making sense of and going beyond the data provided by quantitative analysis.

Studying Civic and Political Participation Considering Their Pedagogical Value

Civic and political behaviours and attitudes have been scrutinized in relation to structural, social and psychological variables (e.g., Costa, 2011; Magalhães, 2008; Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Sobel, 1993; Putnam, 2000; Stolle, 2007; van Zomeren et al., 2008; Geys, 2006). This body of research demonstrates that civic and political participation is positively related with individual variables, such as political knowledge, self-efficacy, and psychological empowerment (e.g., Putnam, 2000; Schmidt et al., 2007; Stewart & Weinstein, 1997). Being engaged seems therefore crucial, as it is a component of democratic, responsive and plural societies. But is this really true,

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http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/8dd87a2c-8612-11e5-90de-44762bf9896,Authorised=false.html?siteedition=uk&_i_location=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ft.com%2Fcms%2Fs%2F0%2F8dd87a2c-8612-11e5-90de-f44762bf9896.html%3Fsiteedition%3DUK&_i_referer=&classification=conditional_standard&iab=barrier-app#axzz42zxEh1FI

regardless of the nature and context of participation? Studies have shown that civic and political participation does not always entail positive benefits, contributing instead to the reinforcement of stereotypes, social distrust and social fragmentation (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Menezes, 2003; de Picolli et al., 2004; Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005). In this vein, research has been developed with a particular focus on the meaning of participation for the individuals, according to its potential to promote action and reflection. Ferreira and Menezes (2001) developed the concept of *Quality of Participation Experiences*, later cast into a questionnaire, which explores the implications and meanings of participation. This concept rests "on classical contributions from developmental psychology, educational theory and political science to define criteria that could inform the quality of participation experiences" (Ferreira et al. 2012, 1). The works of John Dewey (1916), Georg Herbert Mead (1934) and Jean Piaget (1941) were inspirational here, particularly regarding the importance of taking the role of the other and integrating the recognition of difference on self-development. The idea of reflective abstraction also echoes in other literature that stresses the opportunities for social interaction as a source of cognitive conflict (Lind, 2000; Kohlberg & Wasserman, 1980). Additionally, the construct of Quality of Participation Experiences combines these educational and psychological views with contributions from political philosophy, particularly concerning the role of emotions in political experience (Walzer, 1995; Bobbio, 1995) and the relational, plural and confrontational dimension of politics, as it emerges from the interaction between different equals (Arendt, 2001 [1958]).

Quality participation involves experiences that are perceived by participants as personally meaningful, as individuals are involved in diverse activities, participate in decision-making processes and solve real-life problems. The questionnaire created to measure the quality of participation (the *Participation Experiences Questionnaire* - QEP) (Ferreira & Menezes 2001) explores those dimensions by asking respondents to consider them, taking into account their most relevant civic and political experience (in social movements, youth wings, voluntary associations, scouts, religious groups, etc.). In order to look for the condiments of the *quality of participation* through the ethnographic lens, we first administered this questionnaire to 1107 youngsters (from the 8^{th} and 11^{th} grades, and the 2^{nd} year of University). This phase enabled us to gain knowledge of the more relevant youth participation contexts that are particularly promising in terms of their pedagogical and developmental quality. A cross-analysis of the quality of participation experiences and the participatory contexts that young people

identified as personally more relevant showed that, overall, political parties' youth wings are one of the contexts with higher quality of participation, especially if we consider long-term experiences of participation (6 months or more).

The Youth Wings

When we started the ethnographic fieldwork, our goal was to understand what makes this context particularly relevant for youths today, and what makes their very experience a pedagogical one. Fieldwork began in August 2015 and ran in more intensive fashion until February 2016. Access was granted following contacts with the board of the youth wing. Extensive fieldnotes were taken during this period, as our research was exclusively grounded in participant-observation.

Surely, studying politics through an anthropological approach implies vivisecting social actors' understandings and practices of politics: how they produce meanings regarding their experiences in the political world (Kuschnir, 2007). This is not an easy task, though. It requires going into contexts which are nowadays fraught with prejudice and distrust not only from the common citizen but also from the social sciences' community, as exemplified by the statement of the most famous Portuguese sociologist (who happens to be left-wing): "youth wings are the greatest plague in Portuguese democracy"[50]. This type of judgment impacts their members, leading them to recognize their experience as

> bitter-sweet: on one hand, being part of a youth wing enables personal fulfillment based on civic participation and on sharing enriching collective experiences; but, on the other hand, it requires confrontation with a political reality too often unfair and discouraging, and particularly with being discredited by a large group of young people that does not trust the goodwill of political parties as engines of change and progress (as said by a youth wing member). (Vicente, December 12th).

Sarah Pickard (2015) even refers the need for name changes that the youth wings of mainstream political parties in England have gone through, due to the unfavorable and extreme reputations associated with the youth sections of political parties. Despite the fact that youth wings are contexts everyone has heard about, there is little knowledge about them. Therefore, it becomes crucial to "de-exoticize the extraordinary" (Mahler, 2006, p. 287), as suggested by sociology and anthropology.

[50] Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "A reflexão, as instituições e a rua". Revista Visão, December 12th, 2013: http://visão.sapo.pt/opinião/opinião_boaventurasousasantos

Some scholars emphasize that political parties should take their youth wings seriously (Pickard, 2015), calling attention to their responsibility in young people's political disengagement, as they practice "a myopic and exclusory party politics of youth" (Mycock & Tonge, 2012, p. 157) by often breaking the few electoral promises concerning youth issues, assuming a clear adult-centric political agenda and not giving voice to young members in their internal structure. Recent data confirms this situation: according to a Eurostat survey following the European elections of May 2014, only 19% of the Portuguese people aged 18-24 admitted having voted, as opposed to the European average of 28%. There is the risk, then, that youngsters become politically irrelevant because political parties find it useless to try to persuade them to vote[51]. Given this disengagement with formal politics is a global problem, how come research on those who find voting crucial and choose youth wings as fundamental contexts for their participation is so scarce? Bruter and Harrison (2009, p. 1261) put the same question: "Would it not be important to understand what is in their hearts and minds before they make it to the front benches of national political scenes?". Moreover, the little literature about youth wings, especially in Europe, is mostly based on quantitative studies (Pickard, 2015; Bennie & Russell, 2012; Scarrow & Gezgor, 2010; Bruter & Harrison, 2009; Cross & Young, 2008).

Youth wing members are particularly useful to represent young people's interests and link them to formal politics, which nowadays is a pressing and hard task. A youth wing follows the same hierarchical structure as its parent party: municipal branches integrated at district level, and a national coordination. Moreover, as in other countries, youth wing members are sometimes elected in the parliamentary elections, as the parties' deputies lists always have junior positions. Youth wings are often seen by the parent parties as the "much needed lifeblood for political parties" (Mycock & Tonge 2012, 139), as a prime means of recruitment and also as important contexts of political socialization in both organizational and ideological terms (Hooghe et al., 2004; Mycock & Tonge, 2012). Similarly to British parties' youth wings, in Portugal they aim especially at further and higher education students, although the minimum age for membership is 14 years old and the maximum 30 (Pickard, 2015). Frequently, youth wings have their own political agenda, which sometimes inspires the policies presented by the parent party, or reflects an explicit opposition as a result of different ideological

[51] "Os jovens estão a desistir da política, e a política parece prescindir deles", Jornal Público, January, 31st 2016: https://www.publico.pt/politica/noticia/os-jovens-estao-a-desistir-da-politica-e-a-politica-parece-prescindir-deles-1721887

stances between the youth wing and the parent party (Hansen, 2015; Russell, 2005). In fact, youth sections are characterized as "fiercely independent" and they tend to defend more radical political ideas (Bennie & Russell, 2012). Ensuring the future of old-style politics, and still believing in the current mode of governance, in Portugal there are approximately 90.000 young people engaged in youth wings. In what concerns more detailed data (e.g., age, occupation, level of education), we had trouble obtaining reliable information, as there are no organized records - a difficulty also reported by Pickard (2015) in England. As in other European countries, members of political parties play a mediator role between political elites and the community (Seyd & Whiteley, 2004).

The Experience of Participating in a Youth Wing: Living, Doing, and Learning

We have organized the data in three blocks. For narrative purposes, these blocks will be presented sequentially. First, we will address what it is to be *living politics the youth wing way*. Here we will begin by focusing on issues regarding access to the youth wing, and then move on to how relationships are developed and framed, both with other members of the youth wing and with people outside it. This block ends with what we identified as a few principles for succeeding in politics. The second block refers to *doing politics*. It entails a description of four modes of doing politics, which we have named party, backstage, pedagogical and debatement politics. These four modes offer an ample understanding of what doing politics in the youth wing means and involves. Finally, in the third block, we address what youth wing members *learn from* living politics the way they do and doing what they do. In addition to more general learnings, the development of political efficacy, critical thinking and the regulation of political effort and involvement emerged as major learning areas.

Living Politics the Youth Wing Way

Youth wing members see it as a natural arena for civic and political participation. This became clear to the ethnographer when she asked members about their trajectories until entering the youth wing, during a dinner in one of the campaign's days:

> - I came to this youth wing because I believe that this is the way towards the social change, this is the way to fight. I've always been concerned with social injustice, and the way to make a difference. So, for me the question is more like: why is a person like you not a member of a youth

wing or a political party? – Chico asks me. Cristina, who was sitting next to me, also shared her experience:

- It is the same thing for me. I had also been involved in social and volunteering associations, and belonging to the youth wing is a kind of natural consequence, taking my commitment one step forward. (September 26th)

This seems to suggest that for these members becoming part of a youth wing is a natural and obvious way of promoting social change. For them, it is a space for developing and fulfilling goals they have sometimes pursued elsewhere before, or simultaneously, such as in voluntary and social intervention organizations, or student associations in high schools and universities. They strongly oppose the common prejudice against youth wings in Portugal, where they are often regarded as breeding grounds for empty-headed opportunists seeking positions and a career in political parties. One of the oldest higher-rank members states assertively to an audience of youth wing members: "when people tell you that youth wings are nothing but lairs, reply confidently that this is the purest, most beautiful exercise of freedom" (Júlio, December 12th). This being said, it is acknowledged that students' associations at the university level are often associated with political youth wings, and that those who ascend to the high ranks of those students' associations have good chances of obtaining positions in the party - or the Government, if the party is ruling the country - be it in more technical, auxiliary roles or in political functions. During the youth wing camp, the ethnographer asked Laura (a 27-year-old-militant, engaged since she was 14 years old) about these links:

- People here are very much connected to academic associations, aren't they? – I asked.

- Yes, to academic associations – Laura replied.

- But are they connected to academic associations and only then get in the wing? – I asked.

- No. It's the opposite. Usually people become wing members at an early age. They are already part of the wing and then, when they move on to higher education, things happen naturally… Because those are the settings where young people are – Laura explains.

- And then [academic associations] act as a trampoline for political life, that is, as a way of making oneself more visible. Is that it? – I asked.

- Yes, of course. There are many cases like that. It is not disinterested. But there are also lots of people who, when they become 30 years old, leave the wing but do not enrol in the parent party. Because the wing is quite different from the parent party… The ideals become a bit lost… The wing is more based on friendship and affection. (…) (August 26th)

A crucial issue regarding access to the youth wing is, of course, money. While work in the wing is voluntary, and therefore involves no financial gains, in this youth wing in particular there is great care in ensuring that participation involves minimal expenses, or

none at all. Thus, typically transportation and food are provided, and lodging - when necessary - is very cheap. In summary, while a lack of economic capital is no major obstacle to accessing the youth wing, the possession of social capital - reflected in belonging to a network of civic and political organizations - plays a relevant role in defining one's role and status in it, as such organizations both feed and are infiltrated by the youth wing. In fact, "the political field is a relatively closed social universe, where the ability to gain access to insiders and 'important' players is largely determined by one's degree of social capital" (Mahler, 2006, p. 282). We must add that this is valid both for the ethnographer (who had the luck of being close to some of the big players – higher-rank members) and for the youth wing member, whose ability to network through other contexts of civil society makes him/her part of a network of trust inside the youth wing, pulling him/her into politics.

With regard to relationships between members of the youth wing, friendship and affection are two of its defining features. It is clear from the data that the collective, intensive experience of political life produces strong emotions and, often, strong bonds between members. Intensity and closeness are most visible in that, during the most intense month of the campaign for the parliamentary elections of October 2015, the presidents of Porto's district and municipal organs of the youth wing all lived together in the same flat for practical reasons. As one of the oldest member stated: "Politics is made of affections. I tell you this: I did not come here to make friends, but I have many good friends here" (Chico, September 30th). Also, a camp with hundreds of participants, which was held for a week in the summer, played an important role in establishing networks and strengthening bonds between members. Ultimately, it is living politics intensely: the associated victories and defeats, the sharing of emotions that make high-ranked members of the youth wing say that friendship, camaraderie and loyalty are fundamental in politics.

The intensity of life in the youth wing is also a consequence of two articulated traits that characterize its daily workings: mobilization and setting things up. By mobilization we are referring to the continuous calling of members to take part in activities, whether internal to the wing or involving external agents, such as common citizens or the mass media. New technologies are very relevant in this respect, as SMS messages and Facebook groups are privileged means of communication. Setting things up is often the reason why members are mobilized, namely to provide manual labor and ensure the logistics for all types of political events, from rallies to conferences. Clear, methodical communication is a crucial element for ensuring speedy, extensive

mobilization and efficient organization. Reflecting this, the Porto's district of the youth wing included in its Strategic Global Motion a specific topic on organization and communication. It contemplates several aspects, from creating a newsletter to creating video contents for the website, through to holding regular meetings at different territorial and political levels, and strengthening the bonds with politically aligned students' bodies.

Critiques are also a part of the daily workings of the youth wing, namely critiques to the comforts sometimes enjoyed by the higher ranks of hierarchy with regard to accommodation and absence from manual labor. Interestingly, while critiques to the party and its senior members were unheard during the electoral campaign, they surfaced quite emphatically after the elections, with accusations of internal fractures that prevented the party from uniting around its leader. In this respect, the youth wing members find themselves to be different from the party members in the sense that they were united throughout the electoral campaign, never putting the party's interest at stake for personal reasons. In addition, youth wing members also voiced strong critiques to what they considered the old-fashioned and unprofessional way the party led its campaign.

With regard to the relationships with members of the public, that is, the citizens, whether they are old enough to vote or not, there is obviously the need to set things up for their participation in political events. This means, for example, contributing to setting up the venues for rallies during the electoral campaign, and also acting as security staff on behalf of the party leader. There is also a more systematic and politically strategic side to the relationship with common citizens, which involves closeness and monitoring in order to produce adequate interpretations of their behaviors and expectations. Seeking closeness with the public is, of course, clearly evident during campaign activities, be it in street propaganda actions where leaflets are handed out, or in more prolonged interactions in which the political situation of the country is discussed. However, it is not limited to these short periods; on the contrary, it is part and parcel of a politics of proximity that the youth wing actively seeks to develop. As stated by a high-ranked member, "our action is grounded on local action, which is where daily lives are changed" (Edmundo, December 12th). Engaging with local organizations such as schools, hospitals and factories is seen as integral to achieving this goal. Another crucial element is involving more and more young people in politics, with the youth wing acting as a mediator between the youths and the local political authorities; this can also be achieved through youth wing members being active in other civil society

organizations. It is this kind of politics of proximity that enables making politics - and the youth wing - relevant to the people, but also to understand and monitor people's aspirations, to integrate them in political programs.

Living politics in this manner brings up a few unspoken, necessary - but not necessarily sufficient - principles that guide youth wing members to success in politics. First, one needs to be able to mobilize people, both inside and outside the wing, for a range of activities and events. This is a decisive sign of efficiency and commitment to a cause. Rafael, a youth wing member, a recent militant, when talked with the ethnographer about his family life, he addressed the way he became militant about one year ago:

> - (…) I'm in the youth wing… my parents like the idea, they know I'm doing something good… Of course, I have a lot of things to learn with these guys! I have to thank Junior (president of one of the municipal branches) for bringing me here. I knew him already…And he knew that I have a lot of connections with students' associations, so he invited me to become part of the wing. So I think I'm a good asset for the wing, I know a lot of people, I'm persistent and determined. (September 30th)

Second, these mobilization efforts may go as far as to develop instrumental intimate relationships: "I did things while I was in higher education which I regret. I started dating the vice-president of a faculty because I only had the support of three faculties and another guy had the support of two faculties. It was a close call..." (Ricardo, August 26th). Another sign, closely related to these, is the ability to be present at all times, and to be regarded as someone who is always there. This principle is succinctly stated by one of the oldest members: "In politics it is important to see and to be seen" (Ricardo, August 27th). This continual availability is often achieved at the expense of one's health, which again is a signpost of personal commitment to defending a collective cause at all stakes. During the month of the electoral campaign, the members of the wing who lived together in a flat slept on average 4 hours per night, and at one point the only item in the fridge were cans of *Monster*, an energy drink, which were sometimes drunk in conjunction with *Mebocaine*, an analgesic and anti-inflammatory medicine for the throat and mouth. Politics above personal health is the fourth and final principle considered here. There is a continuous effort regulation, translated into a commitment to a range of political tasks, whether they are more or less stimulating (as in the case of participating in the campaign activities of the political party, which sometimes involves just singing along, waving flags and being present during the events). They are capable of doing what the parent party expects of them, do the kind of campaign they believe in,

and keep everyone with a strong sense of collective political efficacy, as better demonstrated in the following section.

Doing Politics

While at the youth wing, we found that doing politics takes on different forms. Some are transparent, some rather opaque; some congruent, others possibly contradictory; some oriented to intellectual consideration, others to emotional attachment. Here we will go through each of them, in an attempt to show their workings and, ultimately, as will be illustrated in the next section, to reveal what can be learned from them.

Party politics, which refers to the entertaining, festive side of political activity, emerged as a significant dimension of political work. It struck us on our very first day of fieldwork, on the bus to the youth wing summer camp. As we wrote at the time:

> In the bus, most people are aged between 18 and 23. In the bus, they act as if they are heading to a summer music festival, or as if they are in their finalists trip. Alcohol and music set the scene for people to get to know each other better: the presidents of local structures of the wing introduce each other, make contacts and suggest partnerships. (August 25th).

This is a camp in which every young militant of the country could participate and, thus, it was also an opportunity for the young members from different districts to get in touch with each other. It was also a kind of preparation of the political campaign that would begin in the coming month. This camp also had an agenda of political debates and speeches with members and deputies of the party. Music plays an important role in bringing to the surface the more emotional side of politics. Singing along was not only a way of keeping spirits high in the youth wing van that toured the district of Porto during the electoral campaign, but also a means to elicit memories from previous campaigns and previous party leaders: “The song from [previous leader] campaign... Now that was a song! As soon as it began playing it gave you shivers... Wow!” (Laura, August 29th).

Senior party leaders can be idolized as rock stars, as parts of their speeches are remembered and given a new life through a kind of role plays in which a member of the wing recites them and another acts as the cheering crowd.

> “You can't imagine it. When the former party leader spoke, the ground trembled!” - said a wing member. I must confess I was surprised: people my age or younger knew political speeches [from years ago] by heart and recited them like someone singing the chorus of the most famous song of their favorite band. (September 26th)

Together with simple noise ("The goal here is to shout out loud as much as possible" – Edmundo, September 26th), music was instrumental in setting the mood right for attending rallies, in mobilizing adherence to a cause based not only on rational arguments but also on emotions. This party-esque side of politics is well summarized by a wing member, addressing the ethnographer in the summer camp: "You can write it down: a good thing about the wing is that it conciliates two things: it mobilizes when it's necessary, but we also have a lot of fun" (August 25th).

Despite the fact that "we may never know the full motivations behind any political group" (Jasper, 2006b, p. 424), the observation of "politics in action" enables a broad understanding of "the dispositions, skills, desires, and emotions of a variety of political actors and the meanings that they attach to their practices" (Auyero, 2006, p. 258). Our data help us make sense of the role of emotions in the youth scene of conventional politics, and the strategies meant to sustain the spirit of members and keep their attachment.

Whereas party politics is all about creating plain emotional attachment, *backstage politics* has to do with the political activities and decisions that take place outside the standard or formal procedures, or imply options that, for one reason or the other, are not deemed suitable to be brought to daylight. This is most clear in what regards the organization of political events and the candidature to political positions. Providing any of these situations is deemed prestigious, it may happen that the preferences of the wing's leading group eventually find their way to becoming fulfilled. We are not referring to any sort of downright illegality, but rather to subtle ways of handling opposing interests. For example, while the process of selecting the person in charge of a significant political event was still under way, it was already clear that the higher ranks of the wing had a marked preference for one of them, which turned out to be the winner. In turn, this yet-to-be winner had already hinted that, with regard to selecting the location of the event, a bid coming from a specific part of the district would have very good chances of winning. And, indeed, it won. It needs to be stressed that we are not saying that undeserving applications won. Certainly, we are not equipped to be judges of that. We can only say that, from the ethnographer's point of view, those victories came as anything but a surprise.

In the same vein, when a potential opponent manifests his intention to run in local elections for the wing, the current leaders are swift to arrange a meeting with him to try to talk him out of it.

> "Carla, you can't imagine! César applied for the presidency of [name of local structure of the wing]!" - Carlos, told me, as he stood with Edmundo at the door. "Really?" - I asked. "Yes. We arranged a meeting with him, and I was even prepared for some political confrontation, but he made it too easy. As soon as we got there he said he had reconsidered and that he was going to give up... Damn, he didn't even put up a fight!" - said Edmundo, making fun of the situation. "But did he have any supporters?" - I asked. "Only his girlfriend and a few other people" - replied Edmundo. Carlos and Edmundo laughed and made fun of the situation. (October 22nd)

Side by side with backstage politics coexists what we have named *pedagogical politics*, which refers to the political activities oriented towards providing information to or training competencies of either youth wing members or common citizens - that is, pedagogical politics is oriented both internally and externally.

It is seen by the wing as opposed to indoctrination, and as a process through which trust in politicians, political parties and organizations can be restored. A member in a high rank is quite clear about this when speaking to another member in a street activity during the electoral campaign:

> "We need to talk with people, it is important that we do a campaign of proximity. (…) Our way of doing this should be pedagogical. We have to do pedagogical politics in opposition to a doctrinaire approach. We must be in touch with the people, close to them, explain things well so that those explanations can endure. Some moments later, Edmundo continued talking about the argumentation with people, the importance of giving solid information and, therefore, explaining people their political cause." (Edmundo, October 2nd).

After the parliamentary elections, the youth wing's rhythm was marked by regular meetings of the district and municipal organs, and simultaneously the organization of the district convention. Throughout these activities, a recurrent theme was the internal training of youth members. At a local convention of the wing, a motion in favor of holding a training camp for members is emphatically approved. This weekend-long training camp should include topics like critical thinking, communication in public, team work, and political marketing. Furthermore, the approved motion states:

> It is the duty of a youth wing to train its members, not only from a technical or an ideological perspective, but also in terms of providing its youngsters the ability to deal with the political challenges emerging from their participation and the responsibility of being the voice of a generation that everyone truly wishes to be a regenerating one. (December 12th)

The youth wing leaders showed concern with the lack of political (but also legal and economic) knowledge of some of its members, and were thus very much interested in

providing training in those areas. During a district meeting, one of the themes discussed was whether the Government should be formed only by elected members of parliament or not. This topic gave rise to a long discussion, in which several members gave their opinion. The next excerpt describes one of these moments:

> Chico favored this change, considering that in this way the population would feel better represented, as it is the people that elect the parliament. In his turn, Lucas said that would generate promiscuity between the executive and legislative organs, and in any case the Government is always scrutinized by the people through the elected members of parliament. This topic lead to others, such as whether or not political parties should make clear, during campaigns, who the Ministers would be in case they won the elections. Several people argued that in many cases this is exactly what happens: for example, when in a given electoral circle one votes for a given party because one knows in advance who will be the next Finance Minister, or that someone coming from the same region as the voter will be a member of the Government.
>
> Edmundo stressed the need to "explain people how the system works". In the same vein, Junior said that all they had been discussing pointed to the same thing: the need for political education in the schools, from an early age. "This is the only way people can get interested, understand the political process and get motivated to take part in it", he said.
>
> [Later, Edmundo added:] "Many people have no information, but the wing also serves the purpose of political training". (November 14th)

The description of this particular moment during a district meeting illustrates the concern that every member should acquire political knowledge in order to be well-prepared to represent the wing, its political causes and struggles, in order to face the generalized mistrust and prejudice against youth wings. Additionally, great emphasis is also placed on creating opportunities for political training of every citizen, particularly young people, namely in schools, in order to strengthen the quality of democracy and participation. This pedagogical approach is focused both on the inside of the youth wing and on the outside (the general population). With regard to the pedagogy of the common citizen, it is interesting to note that there is a fundamental opposition between the wing and the party: whereas the party invests, as mentioned above, in gifts and leaflets, the wing clearly prefers an informational, personalized approach that promotes political debate with the members of the public. Chico explained to the ethnographer how the youth wing believes that the street campaign should be carried out:

> - Giving a pamphlet to someone is just an excuse to talk and debate with the person who receives the pamphlet. Because some of them could just not read our political proposals. It is a moment you can talk with the person about politics…explaining, asking questions, debating…
>
> I noticed that Chico became very critical when another member simply handed out the pamphlets to passersby without promoting any interaction, almost in a mechanized way. When this happened,

> I saw Chico going to speak with the member right away, telling him that he/she should try to speak with the people. (September 24th)

We had the chance to witness plenty of long interactions with common citizens, usually young people with which topics such as youth emigration, labor market precariousness, and the lack of credibility of politicians and the political system were discussed. This pedagogical attitude is often faced with people's confrontational behavior towards the wing members, not only because of the generalized mistrust regarding politicians, but also because of the specific prejudice they hold against youth wings - seen, as mentioned before, as breeding grounds for opportunists. "'This is ignorance' - Chico tells me. 'If people were properly informed, if they read our program, our proposals, they would change their minds. But they don't want to know'".

Finally, *debatement politics*, perhaps the type of activity that most easily comes to mind when thinking of politics. Here, debatement refers to the discussions held between members of the wing, whether they are focused on policies and ideological contents or on organizational aspects.

Organizational matters frequently revolve around the interpretation of regulations and the decision-making regarding the logistics necessary for setting up events. While this latter topic follows common cost-benefit reasoning and involves the voluntary mobilization already mentioned, the interpretation of regulations, at first sight a rather arid subject, turns out to be very relevant not only for transparency reasons, but also because it is intertwined with notions of fairness and democracy. For example, there were lively discussions about gender quotas, the maximum admissible number of mandates in given political positions, and the possibility of electronic vote. Indeed, at some point is becomes impossible to set a clear line between these debates about organizational aspects and deep, fundamental ideological issues. During a meeting in which electronic and compulsory vote were being discussed:

> There was a range of opinions regarding this matter. Chico, Tatiana and other members were in support of compulsory voting, claiming that everyone should feel responsible for whatever Government was elected. Other people argued that even if the votes are blank, as a sign of protest, people need to feel they have the duty to vote and participate in political terms. One member in particular spoke about the Brazilian case, in which people who do not vote are penalized, namely through losing some types of social benefits. (...) Edmundo and Lucas were against such measure. "As a republican and a democrat, I cannot agree that participation is deemed compulsory. It is our duty to instigate that feeling in people so that they voluntarily wish to participate (...)" - Edmundo argued. (November 14th).

Different points of view are discussed, and disagreement takes place often in those moments of political discussion. In a plural environment, one in which every opinion counts, conditions are created so that every person feels that his/her opinion is valued by the group. The dialogue transcribed just above took place in a meeting with all the district militants, where the main points of a Strategic Global Motion were discussed. Interestingly, this meeting took place in a cafe, with all tables set in circle, in order to intentionally promote an open discussion without the embarrassment created by pulpits and microphones. The Motion in discussion was previously sent to all members, and some participants were clearly prepared for it, having searched for information in other countries in order to being able to present, during the discussion, alternatives and concrete data to sustain or disprove some measures under discussion. According to Menezes (2007) these are elements of the participation experience that the literature associates with the promotion of developmental quality.

As a complement to these current debates, there was frequent talk about the role the wing had played in the past in influencing the party's stance towards issues such as abortion, regionalization or the elimination of lifetime subventions for members of parliament, which in some cases actually produced major changes in the laws ruling the country. Such recollections highlight the relevance of the wing's work and commitment, and boosted motivation as they showed the wing at the forefront of political decision-making.

Debates in the wing ranged from the macro political settings like the relationship between Portugal and the European Union - including very recent topics like the refugees' crisis -, to the micro, local politics - such as whether or not a given local authority should provide free textbooks to primary school students – an issue discussed by Chico and Ernesto during the lunch time, in one of the campaign days:

> - This is a policy I have been battling against –Ernesto said.
>
> - I never understood why you are against this measure - Chico said.
>
> - If you look to the dropout rates in primary education you see that this is not a problem, which proves that social action is working well in this level of education – Ernesto replied.
>
> - I'd rather have school books distributed for free even to people who are able to buy them if this ensures that people who can't buy them get access to the books – Chico argued.
>
> - I don't agree. We need to focus on more pressing matters – Ernesto countered.
>
> - Still, we're friends anyway. But let me tell you that you acted badly in the Municipal Assembly – Chico said.
>
> - No, I didn't – Ernesto reacted.

> - Fuck that! Your mayor presents a left-wing policy and you oppose it! Well, congratulations then! – Chico replied, as he put his arm around Ernesto's shoulder as they kept on walking. (September 24th)

Also, the role of the party in the current Portuguese political situation was heavily discussed. The scope of political debate was thus wide, and debates lively. In conventions, it was clear that the wing serves as a school for political communication, as formal speeches were instrumental not only in putting ideas across, but also in mobilizing people through catchy, persuasive soundbytes. The following excerpt exemplifies what we mean, showing how new social and collective futures are imagined by/in the youth wing, which is significantly shaped by the big political scenario:

> The right-wing wants to persuade us that we need to live worse to have a better country, that we must cut down wages to stimulate the economy. But what is economic growth good for if not for paying better wages to the workers? This is their program, the program of an elite. (...) That is why the ideological defeat of the right has become so important. They have been on the upside for too long, but there is something they will never be able to do, which is to defeat history. We have brought down walls that lasted for decades, and brought the left to Portugal. Even knowing what the risks were, we dreamt. (...) The humiliating situation in which the Portuguese people find themselves is not only due to incompetent people in government; the problem is that the model of government of the right-wing sets the State against society. And that is corruption, that is stealing the State from people. (...) This is why we want the return of politics, of equality between people, equality between regions (...). This is our program. Our first conquest will have to be reclaiming the right to dream for citizens. The elites will say that such a right will be experimentalism and that chaos will ensue. We will call that process democracy. (Alexandre, speaking to an audience of youth wing members, December 12th)

Learning from Living and Doing Politics

As indicated just above, the wing is a setting for learning and practicing communication skills. It is also, has hopefully we have been able to make clear, a place for developing a number of other competencies. The abilities to mobilize other people, to negotiate different sensitivities and political stances, to be assertive, to manage information, to control one's motivation and that of others, are actively trained in the wing. In a sense, it is a school of life through which many transversal skills are acquired and, with them, social capital increases. More specifically, there are three important areas of learning: the regulation of political effort and involvement, critical thinking, and political efficacy.

The regulation of (political) effort and involvement, a fundamental feature of metacognition, is readily apparent in the constant monitoring of oneself, of the group,

and of the citizens, as well as of the procedures needed to fulfill a given task effectively, skills which have already been described in this paper. Doing this, of course, requires persistence and determination, not giving up and taking advantage of every opportunity presented. As stated by Chico: "In war, in order to win you must be prepared to die. Courage is what separates the strong from the weak" (September 30th). In the last day of the electoral campaign, when we were talking about what was to be done, he asserted that "we cannot abandon Porto on the last day of the campaign, we must struggle for the last voter in our home", as opposed to going to Lisbon for the final rally of the party's candidate (October 1st).

Additionally, the ability of critical thinking, which refers to applying previous knowledge to new situations in order to assess or solve them, was clearly observable, particularly in political debates between members - in which they did not shy away from making critical evaluations concerning fellow members' political stances, arguing and justifying their positions. Even more strikingly, it was observable in their direct political opposition to the parent party in cases in which they felt young people's interests and the youth wing's ideological positions were not considered. Critical thinking emerges, then, as a competence nurtured in the context of the youth wing, namely through debatement politics.

Finally, high levels of political efficacy, which refers to beliefs about one's personal (internal efficacy) and group (collective efficacy) ability to influence political processes, were easily observed. In this respect, features such as debatement and pedagogical politics, the continuous, intensive mobilization and the work and commitment to setting things up are all traces of strong beliefs in the ability to influence politics. In addition to the aforementioned recollections of the different times in which the wing managed to set the political agenda of the party and, in that way, of the country itself, it is clear that the members believe strongly that they are effective and competent in what they do. This recognition takes place at a personal level, as a member told the ethnographer at the beginning of the fieldwork:

> (...) you will also be able to see political struggle in a strict sense: political debates, discussions, motions. And that is interesting. And, in those moments, I can tell you, for example, that myself, Edmundo and Eduardo are politically very strong. If we're together, forget about it: no-one can defeat us. (September 30th)

Their self-confidence goes as far as one of them saying: "And listen, Carla, one of these days I'll be helping this guy become the president of the party!" (October 1st) or that the

wing does not really follow the party – "(...) if anything, it's the party that follows the wing!" (December 12th). This confident tone surfaces frequently in self-complimentary remarks about the quality of the wing, particularly of its local branch, such as: "we are the best youth wing district in the country", "our district is a reference in the wing", "we did the best electoral campaign of the wing at district level in the whole country". There are, then, plenty of situations in which political efficacy is clearly observable.

Discussion and Conclusions

We hope having made clear that the youth wing is a quality civic and political participation setting. Indeed, the participants are involved in personally meaningful activities in which they have the opportunity to engage in decision-making processes aimed at solving real-life problems. Importantly, at least in this youth wing in particular, access to such quality participation experiences is not contingent upon the possession of economic capital, and this is of course a major feature of the democratization of such experiences. Also, this type of participation is very much anchored in, and reinforces, bonds of friendship and commitment between members. This happens for a number of reasons, the most relevant of which are, perhaps, the intensity of organizational activity and the relevance of political debates both between members and between members and the public – as seen in the section on *debatement politics*. In the same line, the relationship with the parent party, always in a tension between loyalty and confrontation, requires constant monitoring of one's own actions and, at the same time, is of assistance in locating oneself in a wider picture, often in terms of nationally relevant issues. Therefore, in this youth wing we have found an instance of the fact that "Partisanship (...) can also, in some circumstances, be a creative, motivating, and institutionally generative source of civic involvement and reform" (Mische, 2007, p. 23). This is an accord with what Eliasoph argues about voluntary work, suggesting that it should incorporate a clear political dimension that enables participants to grasp the bigger picture of the context and consequences of their work, rather than just keeping themselves to agreeing to do what "no humane person could disagree" with (Eliasoph, 2013, p. 12). The same problem is found by Annette in the fields of experiential learning and citizenship education which, he argues, often involve "a conception of the community that sees it simply as a place or neighborhood where students are merely

'active': *doing good* rather than *political good (i.e., informed, effective citizens)*" (Annette, 2009, p. 152).

Indeed, the notion of working for the public good runs through the activities and discourses of the members, in what amounts to a concrete enactment of Baiocchi's et al. (2014, p. 20) *civic imagination*, defined as "the ways in which people individually and collectively envision a better political, social and civic environment, and work toward achieving that future". Thus, the wing's members regard it as a natural arena for civic and political participation, an arena to actually make things change; in a sense, as a privileged space for combining the civic and the political, which quite definitely are not understood as antagonistic opposites (Mische, 2007, p. 339). This is of assistance in explaining why the wing promotes the participation of its members not only in voluntary and social intervention organizations, but also in student associations in high schools and universities. To be sure, this requires a positive understanding of politics as carried out by political parties. The fact that people commonly associate political parties to corruption, broken promises and opportunism (Mische, 2007, p. 2), and regard political parties and anti-civic (Mische, 2007, p. 343) is one of the main reasons why the youth wing grants *pedagogical politics* so much relevance. Despite all of this, and in order to avoid romanticizing life on the youth wing, it should not be forgotten that it also involves - particularly in times of electoral campaign - a good deal of investment of time in festive, *party politics*, which one could argue is a less elevated - even if inescapable - form of doing politics than debates and pedagogy. Even more evidently, *backstage politics* do seem to introduce a degree of tension, perhaps even contradiction, with the more conscientious forms of doing politics mentioned above.

We also hope to have shown how, as a quality civic and political participation setting, the wing provides learning opportunities in three areas which, while shown to be crucial in other types of studies on participation, are rarely - if ever - analyzed in ethnographic studies: the regulation of political effort and involvement, critical thinking, and political efficacy. In this sense, we believe we have made clear that ethnography is well equipped to study the experience of participation as a relational and collective process, foregrounding the activities and perceptions of the wing's members in order to make sense of their learning processes and outcomes. This research could now be developed in two complementary strands: on the one hand, proceeding with ethnography of the youth wing in off-peak season (that is, in periods of time distant from electoral campaigns); on the other hand, delving into voluntary, civic work organizations to look for how 'the political' is conceptualized and performed. This joint

effort could provide further insights into how individuals manage their (shifting?) identities between political and civic settings. Therefore, it might not only shed light on processes of democratic activity and communication and community building but also, perhaps more importantly, enable a well-grounded debate on the links and tensions between the civic and the political.

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4.3. Living and doing politics in an NGO

In the next section [Article 5] we aim to offer insights on how young volunteers in an NGO experience their civic and political participation. The data indicate that participation in the civic and the political realms may run the risk of becoming progressively disjointed. This raises a number of complex issues, namely regarding the paradoxes and limitations that may lay in forms of participation that, while very successful in terms of the number of volunteers involved and the projects developed, distance themselves from engaging in (institutional) politics in their efforts to make the world a better place.

4.3.1. **Being civic while disavowing politics: an ethnography of a youth NGO in Portugal**

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Abstract

Civic and political participation are the vehicles through which citizens of democratic societies engage in the public sphere, identify and address matters of public concern, and monitor governments' activities. While the civic and the political are often regarded as two sides of the same coin, that assertion deserves questioning in times of an expanding voluntary sector and shrinking participation in institutional and electoral politics. Based on an ethnographic study in a large volunteer organization in the north of Portugal, we discuss the complexities of participation, namely whether it is possible to be civic without being political. In this article, we show how an emphasis in caring for the other and promoting volunteers' personal development coexists with indifference regarding political issues, and how high levels of motivation and engagement concur with resolving (or smothering) conflict through a strong investment in affective bonds, rather than open discussion. Finally, we examine the role of religion in creating collective identity and simultaneously legitimizing a depoliticized approach to social intervention, thus exploring the paradoxes and limitations that may lay in wishing to change the world without engaging in politics.

Keywords: Civic engagement, political participation, voluntary organizations, youth, Portugal

Introduction

Civic engagement and civil society groups have traditionally been identified as the backbone of healthy democracies (Morales & Geurts, 2007), as they 'instill in their members habits of cooperation and public-spiritedness' (Putnam, 2000: 338). Such groups enable people to learn how to address problems collectively, and to self-organize to improve common life (Durkheim, 1957). This traditional view, while continuously reinforced in civil society research, has nonetheless been criticized for excessive optimism. One of the most prominent critiques in recent scholarship, Nina Eliasoph (2013), has examined the role of civic engagement in the context of empowerment projects: the trend in which the civil society is seen to offer remedy for all kinds of societal ills. She has suggested that voluntary associations can teach their members 'to care about the world and talk about their political concerns; but they can also teach members how not to care and to silence these concerns' (2001, p. 39). Eliasoph's work unfolds the inconsistencies in volunteer organizations that aim at fostering community empowerment and yet end up undermining it due to a lack of clear (political) commitment and organization. She is not alone: the puzzles of civil society's role in contexts of crumbling welfare services have been addressed recurrently in recent years (Eikenberry & Kluve, 2004; Milbourne & Cushman, 2015; Siisiäinen et al., 2015). Studies have shown that young generations increasingly withdraw from institutional arenas of political socialization and participation, in particular voting (Putnam, 2000, 2007; Benedicto & Morán, 2002; Norris, 2002; Zukin et al., 2006; Harris et al., 2010). Yet, alternative means of participation and voluntarism are shown to gain increasing support (Beck, 2001; Norris, 2002; Kemmers et al., 2016). The reasons behind the decline of one type and the increase of another type of participation remain, at least in part, elusive.

Much of the above body of scholarship analyses civic engagement either in an Anglo-American or Northern European contexts. In the light of recent years' developments – financial crisis, politics of austerity and massive youth unemployment and, as a response, the *Occupy* and *Indignados* type movements – the question of civic engagement and politics is most likely subjected to differentiation among European democracies. Also, the role of religion has been scarcely addressed in most previous studies, while in the Catholic Southern Europe it has a potentially strong role also among young people. The immediate societal conditions of young people's experiences affecting their participation deserve being better taken into account. In this article, we

begin to fill the existing gap by analyzing current youth civic engagement in Portugal, one of the hardest-hit by austerity politics of Southern European states. We do this through an ethnographic study of a large Portuguese NGO, analyzed from the perspective of the young volunteers' experiences of participation. Our analysis sheds new light on the variation of civic and political engagements, and examines whether and how habits of cooperation, self-organization and work for the public good may co-exist with a clear reluctance to political commitment. Ultimately, the question is if and how civic participation can survive depoliticization (see Luhtakallio, 2012), and what kind of "civic imagination" – that is, the creative and intentional ways in which people imagine and establish new collective futures (Baiocchi et al., 2014) – drives a given setting and its young participants.

Youth participation and the quality of participation experiences

In Portugal, following international trends, young people have progressively disengaged from institutional politics and voting (e.g., Magalhães & Moral, 2008; Menezes et al., 2012a; García-Albacete, 2014). Simultaneously, they are increasingly active in civic groups (e.g., Magalhães & Moral, 2008) – namely volunteer organizations. Studies have shown that volunteer organizations promote high quality participation experiences as they offer conditions for political development (Ferreira, 2006; Heitor, 2011). Seemingly, Portugal presents some features diverging from international trends. While the deinstitutionalization of youth participation and young people's disengagement from voting is clear (Magalhães & Moral, 2008; Menezes et al., 2012a; García-Albacete, 2014), the levels of volunteering in particular are relatively high, especially among young adults, who also exhibit high levels of political interest and attentiveness (Magalhães & Moral, 2008; Fernandes-Jesus, 2015).[52]

[52] Compared with other Western democracies, the overall levels of civic engagement in Portugal are low (except for religious associations). However, Portuguese young people present higher levels of civic engagement and participatory dispositions than the rest of active population (Magalhães and Moral, 2008). Also, in Western Europe, Portugal is the only country where no significant difference exists in political interest between young people and adults and where young people trust other people more, pay more attention to news and hold higher levels of postmaterialist values (García-Albacete, 2014). Thus, if recent USA generations appear to be losing connection to the community and interest in regular, long-term commitments (Jennings and Stoker, 2004), in other Western societies civic engagement and social capital may be undergoing different changes (Norris, 2002), and a significant decrease in institutional participation may mean that young people are intentionally turning away from institutional politics towards either community (or global) concerns.

We define civic engagement, following Zukin et al. (2006) as involvement in the community to address its needs and goals 'through direct hands-on work in cooperation with others'; which 'normally occurs within nongovernmental organizations and rarely touches upon electoral politics' (ibid. 51). Thus, civic engagement (in communities, churches or other organizations) 'can be highly political, entirely nonpolitical, and anything in between' (Fiorina, 1999, p. 5). Therefore, engagement *per se* is not necessarily 'enough' or 'good', as it can amount to nothing but individual-centered and short-term involvement and possibly even lead to the instrumentalization of civic groups by elites, and to an over-representation of 'extreme voices' (Fiorina, 1999). In Portugal, several studies have shown that volunteer organizations promote *quality participation* experiences as they offer conditions for political development (Ferreira, 2006; Heitor, 2011). By looking closely at the experience of volunteering and the notion of quality, we want to contribute to the scholarly calls for considering more than mere 'head-counting' in analyzing civic engagement (e.g., Putnam, 2000; Eliasoph, 2013; Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005; Menezes et al., 2012a).

Our starting point for the ethnographic study presented here was the results from a quantitative study in which volunteer organizations were reported as offering meaningful, high quality participation experiences together with opportunities to reflect about them, thus promoting plurality, integration of conflict in supportive environments, and long-term engagement. This survey was part of a research strand focused on the quality of participation in several participatory settings in Portugal (e.g., Ferreira, 2006; Azevedo, 2009; Veiga, 2008; Fernandes-Jesus, 2015). In this vein, Ferreira et al. (2012) argue that some 'civic and political experiences might […] present the variety of developmental conditions, and interaction quality [which is] key to understand[ing] the transformational potential of experiences' (Ferreira et al., 2012: 601). This claim is based on the notions of classical theorists of psychological and educational development who explored the relevance of contact with plural perspectives, the integration of conflicts and meaningful action, namely through role-taking experiences and reflection in supportive, yet challenging, contexts (e.g. Dewey, 1916; Kohlberg, 1976; Zimmerman, 1995). Therefore, Ferreira et al. (2012, p. 601) argue that 'getting involved in political parties, unions, social movements, volunteer work in the community, religious or recreational associations (…) may have the high quality social interaction features that (…) prompt development in both cognitive and attitudinal domains'. They also integrate contributions from political philosophers such as Arendt (2001 [1958]), who states that politics emerges from interaction between equals who are inevitably

different. Psychological approaches acknowledge that cognitive conflict arising from interaction with different others leads to adjustments crucial to psychological development (e.g., Brown et al., 2000). Theiss-Morse and Hibbing (2005, p. 227), in a literature review of participation in civic groups, emphasize that democratic practices should occur in heterogeneous groups capable of integrating conflict, and that "citizens need to learn that democracy is messy, inefficient and conflict-ridden". The productive value of conflict, then, is a dimension of the quality of participation experiences.

Ferreira and Menezes (2001) developed an instrument to capture dimensions related to the actions performed by citizens in civic and political settings, their reflection about them, the relational quality of those settings (whether they offer opportunities to interact with different perspectives in a supportive environment or not) and the constancy of participation. The Participation Experiences Questionnaire (QEP) assesses the quality of participation in civic and political experiences. High quality experiences are seen as those with a transformative potential in terms of personal development, which may in turn stimulate collective change. This instrument has been validated in several studies with adults and young people in Portugal (from national and migrant origins), showing that high quality experiences favor more complex levels of thinking about politics (Ferreira, 2006), psychological empowerment (Veiga, 2008), dispositions to future involvement (Azevedo, 2009), and internal political efficacy (Fernandes-Jesus, 2015). Ferreira (2006) shows that high-quality experiences are related with more complex and integrated ways of thinking and acting politically, while Heitor (2011), through a qualitative approach, concludes that volunteering experiences of higher education students favor their psychological empowerment and the development of social networks. These studies also show that, in most cases, no participation at all can be better than low quality participation in terms of political development. The ethnographic research presented here builds on a study that involved the use of QEP and made us decide taking a closer look at voluntary organizations (see the *Methods* section).

Volunteering in Portugal

Volunteering in Portugal is historically rooted in the Catholic Church (Catarino, 2004; Franco, 2005). This heritage, together with the mutualist tradition and the recent democratic transition, is crucial to make sense of the Portuguese non-profit sector

(Marques, 2011). Indeed, the principles of subsidiarity and common-good, participation and solidarity, together with the values of the Catholic Church's Social Doctrine, impact both the legal framing and the common understanding of what volunteering should be (Marques, 2011). Despite the separation between the Church and the State since the XIX century, the prominence of religion was consecrated both in the Constitutions of 1933 (promulgated early into Salazar's authoritarian regime) and 1976 (the democratic Constitution promulgated after the Carnations' Revolution of 1974).

Additionally, in Portugal, religious belief and church belonging are significant predictors of participation both in religious and non-religious volunteering organizations (Catarino, 2004). The influence of Catholicism helps explaining the association between volunteering and social care (Abreu, 2008), even more so considering that Portugal, alike other Southern European countries, is characterized by an underdeveloped Welfare State and thus pressure and threat to the autonomy of voluntary organizations (Ferrera, 1999; Reis 2010). It should be noted that, in religious organizations, participation is associated with higher levels of social integration, as religiosity tends to encourage voluntary work (Ruiter & De Graaf, 2006) and proximity with mobilization networks (Klandermans, 1984).

Also, Portugal is one of the so-called developed countries with the steepest income gaps, surpassed only by the USA (Wilkinson & Picket, 2009). The unemployment rate's rise from 9.4% to 13.9% between 2009 and 2014 (peaking at 16.2% in 2013), and simultaneous, drastic cuts in social benefits[53] provide an illustration of the severity of the recent crisis in Portugal.[54]

A Report characterizing volunteering in Portugal (Romão et al., 2012) claims there are 600.000 volunteers in Portugal, 60% of them engaged on a regular basis, with an increase in young volunteers. In Non-governmental organizations for development (NGODs), like the one we chose for this study, volunteers are mostly young, female, and have high academic qualifications (Romão et al., 2012). The main motivations for volunteering reported are, broadly speaking, the 'defense of the common-good and of the solidarity principles' (Romão et al., 2012: 54). Despite a strong reliance on public funding and the influence of religion, voluntary work in Portugal has become increasingly professionalized (Franco, 2005), and focused on effectiveness (Machin & Paine, 2008).

[53] Resulting e.g. in the decrease of beneficiaries of Guaranteed Minimum Income by over 150.000.

[54] Another telling consequence of the recent austerity measures is that between 2011 and 2014 nearly 500.000 people emigrated from Portugal (a country of roughly 10 million), about 200.000 of them permanently.

Methods and context of study

The analysis we present below was initiated after a quantitative study based on the Participation Experiences Questionnaire (QEP).[55] The respondents were 1107 Portuguese students from private and public schools and Universities, located in rural and urban areas. The group identified in the survey as "high quality participation" was cross-tabulated with the contexts where young respondents had been participating for at least 6 months. Voluntary organizations, namely charity groups and human rights organizations, scored 56.7% and 86.2%, respectively, as contexts of high quality of participation experiences.

We then conducted an ethnographic study to address questions that survey data leaves unanswered: what actually happens in the participatory settings identified by the youth as personally more meaningful? How do the civic and the political articulate in a context of high quality participation? Ethnographic fieldwork was chosen to generate in-depth understanding about these groups and settings (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). We selected an NGO in Porto as the field site, not only because it is one of the biggest in the region, but also because of its reputation in social intervention and in successfully recruiting young members. The main fieldwork period lasted from October 2015 to March 2016. It included weekly voluntary work, fortnightly meetings and weekend activities. In this paper we name this organization TOGod, to allude to the collective bonds it advocates (its motto is 'We are Together') and to its religious undertones, even if officially it is not a religious organization.

TOGod has 400 volunteers and this figure increases annually. It is divided into two groups: youths and adults. The ethnographer joined the youth group (members aged between 18-26 years old), which has almost 200 volunteers. TOGod's self-reported mission is human development, and it carries out several national and international volunteering projects with vulnerable populations. The national projects in Portugal are aimed at the homeless, the elderly, institutionalized young people, disadvantaged

[55] The QEP is a self-report measure that starts by asking about respondents' participation in political parties, social movements, groups of volunteering, religious organizations, etc., and the duration thereof. The respondents rate their degree of involvement in the experience considered the most meaningful. The respondents are then asked to consider the opportunities for action and reflection the latter offers. Quality of Participation Experiences result from a clustering procedure that classifies participants into groups that integrate both the action and reflection dimensions of the participation experience. Multiple cluster analyses are employed to classify participation on the basis of similarity derived from the scores of QEP subscales (action and reflection). The final variable has three groups: low quality of participation (low scores on action and reflection), medium quality of participation and high quality.

children, and mentally disabled people. The organization's funding depends principally on its own fundraising activities, including professionally organized gala dinners, offertories, barbecues, concerts, theatre plays, solidary walks, fairs, etc. Occasionally, private companies fund specific projects, as the private sector is increasingly pressed to take on social responsibilities.

To carry out this study, the ethnographer got an authorization from the board of the NGO. The requirement was to behave as a regular volunteer for at least one year: attend the initial meetings (in which the mission, aims and projects were presented), enroll in a project (to do volunteering on a weekly basis) and participate in all activities (fortnightly meetings and weekend activities). This sought to avoid causing disruption in TOGod's operations. The ethnographer was allocated to one of the institutions working with mentally disabled people. This specific volunteering project, likewise most TOGod's projects, is based on years of cooperation with a local social institution. It needs to be highlighted that these kinds of institutions struggle with financial and human resources difficulties. Therefore, they typically welcome volunteer assistance, especially stable and qualified one – as in TOGod's case. Indeed, in the first meeting attended by the ethnographer, the director of the institution for mentally disabled people expressed his gratitude for the volunteers' assistance.

We chose TOGod because it is quite representative of the Portuguese volunteering scenario (Romão et al., 2012; Serapioni et al., 2013): most volunteers are women, middle-class, typically university students, some just recently graduated. TOGod's mission is to be 'a school of life' focused on assistance and development, contributing to 'a better world, with less needs' (TOGod´s website). It is strongly related to social care and has relevant connections with the Catholic Church, although it is neither a religious organization nor formally affiliated to the Church. In any case, most of TOGod's projects run in partnership with secular institutions. During the fieldwork, the ethnographer interacted with about 30 volunteers in total, more regularly with 7 women and 3 men. The average age of this group was 23. These volunteers were aware of the ethnographer's researcher role.

Practices of volunteering: serving the other

The beneficiaries of the institution for mentally disabled people are occupied by carrying out simple tasks paid for by local private companies (e.g. making clothes' pegs). The volunteers assist them in their tasks, simultaneously chatting with the

beneficiaries about the singers they like, TV shows they watched, something that upset them, or questions they pose about the volunteers' own lives. The beneficiaries seem thankful of the volunteers being there, often hugging them or asking, every week, when will they return (some of the beneficiaries don't have an accurate notion of the time). Additionally, the volunteers organize events for the beneficiaries outside their institutions. For example, for the mentally disabled group, TOGod organized a Christmas party, held in a Faculty building (with a Students' Association support to TOGod). Sometimes, the institutions, as a way of thanking TOGod, contribute to its fundraising activities (e.g., by making cakes for sale).

The ethnographer did voluntary work every Thursday morning together with Xana, another volunteer at TOGod. Xana was more experienced, as TOGod always pairs up new volunteers with experienced ones. Xana's experience translated into effectiveness: she always arrived first at the institution, greeting everyone, even the most mistrustful and wary beneficiaries, asking them what they were doing. She continuously strove to interact with everyone, including those with whom interaction was difficult – the less friendly and more mistrustful, the more aggressive and the ones with severe mental disabilities. In their turn, they seemed receptive to Xana's approach, smiling and often wanting to be near her.

Besides weekly volunteering, TOGod organizes activities such as the "work weekend", in which all volunteers travelled to a small Northern village and were lodged for 3 days in a foster care institution for children. During these days, they assisted the children and the elderly from nearby nursing homes. At the start of the journey, a volunteer (member of the direction board) stated:

> This will be a magic weekend which will fill our hearts. This is an opportunity for younger volunteers to experience our way of being, collectively, in the service of others. (Marta, January 29th)

For the work weekend, volunteers organized into small groups to undertake the activities with the children and the elderly as planned by the direction board (composed, in yearly rotation, by more experienced volunteers). These groups were organized into shifts so as to attend to both the children and the elderly throughout the weekend. After each shift was completed, the members of the board called the volunteers for short briefings. A spokesperson for each of the groups reported what they had done with the beneficiaries, so as to avoid repeating activities in the following shifts. The elderly in the nursing homes looked quite grave at the start, but when the volunteers approached

them and interactions began, their expressions changed. Later, several were laughing and chatting continuously, sharing stories about their past and their family. Others joined the activities proposed by the volunteers, playing traditional games, dancing and laughing. In the end, they thanked volunteers for coming by. Although the more experienced volunteers had prepared many materials to implement a range of activities (songs, games, etc.), they were comfortable doing whatever the beneficiaries wished, trying to understand how they could benefit from their presence. For these volunteers, this is what "serving the other" – a recurrent expression in TOGod – seemed to mean: the ability to listen, and the flexibility to adjust.

In the foster care institution, where volunteers spent most of the weekend, many children knew older volunteers from previous years. In the first day, the volunteers either assisted children in their homework or played the games they wanted. The second day was pretty much focused on the preparation of a big party, like a TV show, where children performed playlets, songs and dances. Each performance was prepared jointly by groups of children and volunteers: this meant exchanging ideas, creating props and rehearsing (the volunteers alone crafted the sceneries). Afterwards, the farewell moment was very emotional, with several children hugging the volunteers, crying, not wanting to let them go.

In the meeting prior to the work weekend, the board emphasized its importance in familiarizing new volunteers with TOGod's way of doing volunteering, and its importance to the children; volunteers were shown a slideshow that said that 'every year they [the children] wait for this visit, for them it is their Christmas (…) you will make their best weekend happen' (January, 20th). Surely, both the elderly and the children seemed to enjoy the weekend. And yet, from our analytical viewpoint, while certainly emphasizing the nurture and display of affections, this type of work will hardly contribute to changing the structural situation of the beneficiaries. To be sure, this raises questions regarding the nature and goals of volunteering. We will explore these issues in the following section, namely by seeking to understand the drivers of TOGod's work, how it engages volunteers and promotes their sustained involvement; in sum, how participation in TOGod is experienced by the volunteers.

Culture inculcation: practicing care and the exercise of contemplation

After leaving the institution on a Thursday morning, the ethnographer tells Xana that she will be unable to go to next week's meeting because of a professional

appointment. The ethnographer added that TOGod is fairly demanding in terms of time commitment, intentionally addressing how volunteers deal with this:

> Sometimes I can't go to meetings either. And there are some people that almost never go. There are people that I remember from the first meetings and then they just evaporate… Every year is the same thing – Xana said. [She then adds that such people] can do volunteering in another organization, because TOGod is much more than that. It is not just going out and doing volunteering. TOGod' spirit is much more than that! (…) [our strong] relationships are created in moments such as the work and reflection weekends! Those activities are fundamental! (January 28th)

In this section we will try to grasp this 'spirit', grounded on *bonds* between volunteers and a continuous work of *reflection*. Both aspects are instrumental in conveying a particular way of being a volunteer.

The fact that experienced volunteers are paired with novices reveals an organizational dimension of TOGod: promoting learning through example and creating a secure environment for new volunteers. At the beginning of each year, each volunteer is 'allocated' to one of the direction members, who takes the role of godfather/mother. The godfather/mother is responsible for guiding the volunteer along the 'service pathway', and support him/her. Here, seniority means more knowledge and wisdom. Admiration, then, grows hand-in-hand with hierarchy, since the more dedicated and experienced one is, the higher the place in the hierarchy. This explains a certain mysticism involving the founders of TOGod, observable in the way the volunteers talk about them, like Xana below:

> I remember last year, during the 'reflection weekend' I had the privilege of meeting Raul, one of TOGod's founders, and wow… he is awesome. It was really great talking to him, to meet him! I was lucky to have been in the same group as one the TOGod's founders… it is so inspiring… that person is an angel! (December 9th)

These internal dynamics seem to be effective as they foster admiration and, consequently, strengthen the sense of belonging. Additionally, the hyperbolization of affection that characterizes the volunteers' relations in TOGod favors a 'brotherhood spirit' – older volunteers call each other 'bros/sis' and are constantly hugging and smiling at each other.

There is another crucial dimension in being a volunteer here: the requirement of constant *reflection* about oneself as volunteer. Once a year TOGod organizes a weekend focused on self-development. This is one of the rare activities in which TOGod´s founder, Raul, participates, since he now works for a global humanitarian organization

and lives abroad. For this annual weekend, in which the ethnographer took part, TOGod rented a large country house, property of the Catholic Church. The weekend's theme was "Dream to fulfil". Opening one of the reflection sessions, Raul elucidated the audience:

> Thinking about what we do, about the service, is crucial in order we can be better and more prepared to face the personal, professional and volunteering challenges. Life is tough for those who are soft. - Looking at a volunteer who was wearing a football shirt, Raul proceeds: - The game here is not football; it is love, so we have to practice the smiles, affection, the hugs, care: this is TOGod's culture. It is from individual reflection that it becomes possible to move on to reflecting about the way we are as a group. How should we intervene? The way of changing people´s lives is grounded on reflection about how to do it. This is what explains the importance of this weekend. That is why this it is fundamental to engage in this exercise of contemplating life. (February 27th).

This culture of reflection is constantly inculcated in volunteers. The hyperbolization of affection and positive attitudes stand out, as recognized by a volunteer during a 'group sharing moment':

> At the beginning, when I came to TOGod, I thought all of this was a bit weird. It seemed that everyone was stoned…always talking about love… In Covelo [the small village where the 'work weekend' took place] I realized that I had also caught the disease… and, I must say, I have never felt so healthy. (Claudia, January 30th)

Interestingly, while this kind of participation is recurrently portrayed as happening in a smooth, positive fashion, it seems to require a good deal of personal effort, as there is a clear demand of exposing one's 'inner feelings' to the group. This practice takes place during 'moments of sharing' that are aimed at promoting personal reflection, and at making each person think about his/her role as a volunteer in order to better deal with such a demanding task. The 'moments of sharing' were often intensely emotional. In the excerpt below, a volunteer asks herself if she is doing enough:

> Joana (a first-year volunteer), with her eyes closed and her head resting on her knees, said:
> - I'm feeling a bad person…because I was a little disconnected today… I feel that TOGod was crucial [for the beneficiaries] but I wasn't.
> A boy (a first-year volunteer) reacts:
> - Don't feel like that, Joana. This has been the best weekend of my life. Here I feel I can be myself, I was really needing this. (…) This weekend is made by each person. So I have to thank you, Joana, for being here.
> Joana still had her eyes closed and her head on her knees, hiding her face. She seemed to be crying. After the sharing moment I saw Joana going towards that boy and hugging him. (January 30th)

TOGod's volunteer training systematically promotes this kind of self-reflexivity. All meetings include activities that stimulate volunteers to "look inside". The flip side of this continuous reflection is that it seems to narrow the opportunities for different ways of being a volunteer. Indeed, the conflict between what each person is and what he/she should be (the collective meaning-making of volunteering) is smoothened by the existing bonds, ultimately leaning towards conformity with the norms of what makes a good TOGod volunteer.

Being fully committed to the organization necessarily means embodying its identity. This is central in TOGod, considering details such as some of its songs, in which the word 'God' is substituted by 'TOGod', or when a volunteer guiding a moment of prayer says:

> Each one of us, in his/her own way, is crucial and complements TOGod. TOGod is like God, it is omnipresent, and exists through each one of us. It is here in this weekend, and at the same time it is in Timor through the volunteers who are there, serving. (Xana, February 27th)

Living as a volunteer seems to be the corollary of the relationship with *the Other*. During a sharing moment in the 'reflection weekend', Marisa, a 22-year-old university student and third year volunteer states her feelings:

> From this weekend I take a strong feeling of having been deeply taken care of. TOGod is a dream come true. TOGod is a dreams machine; we help make dreams come true. And it is by doing this that I feel good. (…) TOGod is not a physical thing, TOGod is inside me. (February 28th)

For these volunteers, then, participating in TOGod becomes 'a way of being'. This is in accord with the great deal of work the organization puts into working each volunteer's perception of him/herself. This personal transformation is presented as a precondition for work with others, 'to make the world a better place'. As Maria, a member of the direction board, stated during the 'reflection weekend':

> This is not a part-time job, we are TOGod, and making the world a better place is in our DNA. (March 16th).

While TOGod is a non-religious organization and not all volunteers are religious, the higher ranks of the organization (namely, the founders and the board of directors) have close connections to the Catholic Church. Thus, they organize moments of prayer, although these are non-mandatory and actually few people take part in them. Another

element in TOGod's internal culture that clearly resonates with Catholicism is the authority of more experienced volunteers (the godfather and the godmother): the ones who take on more responsibilities, who serve more, are also the ones who take care more.

Thus, volunteering in TOGod is more than just a practice; it is almost a belief system. The immaterial service of care is to be carried out with increasing quality, unfolding as a virtuous cycle. This is the way that TOGod volunteers appear to understand the volunteering culture: they live and relate to others in meaningful, active ways, focusing on high standards of affection. Antonio, an older volunteer, explained this in the following way:

> TOGod is probably the only NGO I know that pays all this attention to the volunteer, which encourages self-analysis (…) such moments, in which we care for each other, enable us to serve with quality. (…) which is crucial because our work is not tangible or material, we do not give soups or distribute clothes. (February 28th)

TOGod, then, is the anchor for the personal transformation sought through this reflexive work focused on self-knowledge. You care for others in and through TOGod, you get to know yourself better using TOGod as a mirror, until you find TOGod inside you and then you become TOGod yourself. The 'volunteering formula' of TOGod indeed appears to carry mystical elements, or possibly include an indoctrination process that is hard on some people. While all this may look like an odd 'fusion of theology and managerialism' (Bunn & Wood, 2012, p. 642), our material shows that, for many volunteers, TOGod provides truly intense, demanding, yet also rewarding experiences.

The puzzles of volunteering (or the complexities of the quality of participation)

We began this article with a focus on the relationship between the civic and the political engagements. The ethnographic material we collected compelled us to ask: how does one construct his/her role as a citizen, pursuing a better world for the needy, in such a seemingly conflict-free environment, without bringing to the fore the underlying socio-political structure? Indeed, doing good without thinking about or discussing the origins of social problems reminds us of the sharp separation between the civic and the political life that Eliasoph (1998, 2013) found in the United States, where discussions with different viewpoints and collective analyses of the wider socio-political context were

often regarded as depressing and difficult. The organization's task would then be reduced to carrying out projects 'with which no humane person could disagree (…) thus severing any connection between civic volunteering and political engagement' (Eliasoph, 2013, p. 12).

However, our case shows significant differences to Eliasoph's research settings, namely in what she has pointed out as the shortcomings of empowerment projects (2011, x-xi, 231-246). First, 'plug-in volunteering', which leads to volunteering for the sake of volunteering (or for the sake of better CVs) does not occur in TOGod, as one of its distinctive features is precisely long-term commitment: each volunteer agrees to a minimum of one-year collaboration in a single setting. Furthermore, volunteers are required to offer several work hours per week to the chosen setting. Moreover, TOGod's projects and partnerships typically last for years, and its partner institutions tend to give it positive feedback, contrary to what happens in organizations analyzed by Eliasoph, in which pressures to report achievements to funders promote look-a-like successes and the misrecognition of the needs of the target groups. Finally, TOGod's volunteers display high levels of satisfaction, motivation and personal engagement, and do not seem to have immediate instrumental reasons for volunteering. Yet, the question of soothing and/or concealing tensions – one that Eliasoph stresses as crucial in understanding the consequences of volunteering cultures and political citizenship (ibid., p. 246-254) – is clearly puzzling in TOGod's case, too: during the entire fieldwork period, the ethnographer never encountered a situation in which a conflict or a political disagreement unfolded openly.

Nevertheless, as Lichterman and Eliasoph (2014, p. 810) stress, if 'actors […] see their action as grounded in and speaking to "society" however they imagine it, their action is potentially civic'. TOGod elaborates a shared meaning of what a better world should be, how to organize around this common goal and, together, achieve it. Thus, it generates collective efficacy – related to the belief that as a group they can overcome difficulties and be effective in their activity (Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014). Additionally, religion seems to be a driver not only of collective efficacy but, more generally, of civic work in TOGod's case. While it does not define itself as a religious organization, its repertoires of action and forms of communication frequently cross boundaries between the religious and the non-religious (Lichterman, 2012). Indeed, the 'moments of sharing', infused with emotional resonance, resemble the Durkheimian (1912) ceremonial activity that fosters membership and, in some way, effectiveness, while dissolving individual identities into the group. Collective emotional arousal binds people to the values held by

the group, leading them to conformity with collectively shared norms. In this vein, Lichterman (2008, p. 98) states that 'whether theologically articulate or not, civic groups may use religious language to address the practical problems of creating collective identities and working together'. In other words, the religious dimension may legitimize, naturalize and reinforce collective cognition about volunteering and a given notion of civic identity (Lichterman, 2008). Here, a better world is pursued through continuous, engaged self-monitoring. This 'work of the self on the self' translates into specific languages (e.g., ways of talking) and techniques (e.g., sharing moments) that operationalize the 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1997) through which one can act upon one's soul and thoughts. In this approach, social change is more grounded in personal transformation (making oneself a positive and kind human being) than in engagement with structural political issues such as social inequality and social policies. Also, the 'emotional investment' in collective identities (Melucci, 1995) plays a major role in creating the levels of commitment enjoyed in TOGod, illustrated, for instance, by a volunteer's statement that 'sometimes [TOGod] is more of a family than my own'. The role of affective bonds in motivating participation has been suggested by previous studies (Epstein, 1991; Jasper, 2006a), and TOGod's case also echoes McDonald's description of 'experience movements', in which private, embodied and communicative experiences are determined by 'the relationship to the other, in which the self becomes another' (2004, p. 590).

We argue that TOGod's approach offers volunteers an added sense of ontological security that they do not wish to jeopardize by engaging in political debate, not even in a period of political effervescence like the one in which this ethnography was conducted. Indeed, the members of TOGod never mentioned the socio-political scenario, not even the political issues directly related with the population with whom they work: the political disinvestment of the past few years regarding mentally disabled people, with institutions struggling with lack of financial support, the increasing numbers of homeless people without a sustained governmental strategy for their integration, etc. This silence suggests an intentional protection from political debate, regarded as inconvenient because it might bring in conflictual dimensions that would challenge features that make TOGod an efficient organization at what it seeks to do. TOGod's civic imagination, then, rests on a notion of personal development and volunteering as the bases for enhancing the common good.

With regard to the notion of quality of participation, the ethnographic work in TOGod enabled us to add complexity to it. On the one hand, TOGod's volunteering

culture meets several criteria of high quality participation by QEP: strong involvement of members, their commitment to several activities, and a continuous concern with reflection in order to improve effectiveness. On the other hand, the avoidance of conflict and the depoliticization of engagement were flagrant regarding how the construct of 'quality of participation' is grounded, among other things, on the importance of dissonance (as confrontation with plural opinions leads to cognitive development). Our ethnographic study thus shows that the conflict dimension of 'quality participation' can be entirely absent. The mixed methods approach we deployed thus highlights that participation is not a black-and-white phenomenon: from a psychological perspective (QEP), TOGod's volunteers are the prototype of committed, engaged, active citizens working towards social change; from a sociological perspective, they emerge as a conflict-avoiding, faith-enacting group, efficient in implementing social care and personal well-being and self-efficacy of its volunteers.

Finally, returning to Eliasoph's seminal critique of civic engagement as 'automatically' fostering democracy, our study shows that two very different volunteer practices that generate very different individual, group and community outcomes can nonetheless both lead to depoliticized volunteering cultures. Indeed, we have shown that participation in a NGO can comprise continuous commitment to social causes, efficacy in addressing its goals, reflection about the participation experiences in intentionally supportive conditions, and meaningful individual rewards; however, it can also take place a conflict-free environment, in which structural social problems are left unanalyzed, and politics is disavowed. Following Zukin et al. (2006, p. 52), this is highly problematic, as 'neither (civic or political) alone is sufficient to address the myriad collective decisions that must be made in advanced democracies'. In the context of dismantling welfare States, the grim yet rather realistic assumption can be made that depoliticized volunteer organizations may act as a little helper, but not as challengers to the political project of austerity.

Future research could attempt to describe and analyze the configuration of the relationship between the civic and the political in other settings and groups, and in different countries. Additionally, further research could try to learn who and where are the youngsters who 'just evaporate': what their motivations were and what kind of participatory trajectory they chose instead (if any).

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions (but mainly, hopefully, contributions for democracy and education)

This thesis has sought to understand the meanings youngsters produce regarding democratic participation, to analyse the individual and structural factors concurring to participatory processes, and to explore effects of participation in the lives of youngsters. The use of different methods enabled gaining access to diverse perspectives on the phenomenon of youth participation. Now is the time to draw out the main implications of bringing those methods and perspectives together. This section is animated by such an effort, and will focus on the contributions to educational, political and scientific fields.

Implications and contributions for the educational system

The results from this research reinforce previous studies that stress the need to consider the developmental potential of some civic and political experiences (Ferreira et al., 2012; Fernandes et al., 2012a). At the same time, they go beyond them by showing that quality experiences of participation are related to students' metacognition, specifically their ability to self-regulate their learning, which in turn improves academic performance. This finding can be of added value to the instructional models focused on transforming merely instrumental schooling experiences (which, from a developmental perspective, are unsuccessful) into personally relevant ones. Although this is a classical educational premise – it is known since Dewey (1916) that "the quality of mental process, not the production of correct answers, is the measure of educative growth" (p. 207) – it remains a challenging agenda. Therefore, the construct of quality of participation may be a contribution to the practices focused on instructional designs aiming to increase students' metacognitive competences, reinforcing the role played by the confrontation with different perspectives, open and supportive of environments, in which students may have the opportunity to reflect about the meaning of what they are experiencing and learning (either in academic or participatory arenas).

In addition, the recognition that youngsters are learning citizenship by doing and living it in a range of ways is of crucial importance. The youngsters' discourses about the Portuguese socio-political scenario, their visions about democracy and the political system are quite enlightening of the ways they have been learning and practicing democracy. The Portuguese government has just announced that Citizenship Education will most likely return to the school curriculum. Whatever format it acquires, it should, first and foremost, recognise and value the learnings taking place outside the school; that is, it needs to integrate the learning of democratic citizenship as a situated and 'in-context' process in which youngsters practice their citizenship and learn about

democracy throughout different life settings (Biesta & Lawy, 2006). It should be grounded on what youngsters know and what they are learning from the social and relational contexts in which they are immersed. The promotion of partnerships between formal and non-formal educational institutions and contexts (namely participatory settings) may be a way to bridge the in- and out-of-school learnings in an effective way. This connection between schools and communities is not new; yet, the inclusion of practical elements in learning about democracy, both at formal and at non-formal level, continues to be a goal yet to accomplish (Cammaerts et al., 2015). Furthermore, youngsters should be included in the decision-making processes about those contexts, which should be diverse, in order to avoid limiting participation to social care practices and consensual types of experiences. More politicised forms of engagement (either in political parties or less formal political movements) always entail a considerable degree of controversial and inconvenient discussions, from which educational institutions typically wish to distance themselves from. Yet, to learn about democracy necessarily entails "to learn that democracy is messy, inefficient and conflict-ridden" (Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005, p. 227). To mask this dimension by not embracing such practices in which youngsters engage in entails risks for democratic education. Recognition is, then, the key-word here. Youngsters expect schools to be non-judgemental contexts, in which they can be regarded as full citizens who are involved in diverse experiences, have complex viewpoints about the world and are capable of imagining different political futures. Then, at the very least, the recognition and discussion about contexts and forms of participation, including those more subjected to prejudice (such as the youth wings), is fundamental. Furthermore, in this reflection and debate, important insights may be produced, helping youngsters to reflect about the pedagogical condiments entailed in their own experiences. This could be articulated and complemented with the learning of political information, regarded by the youngsters as adding density to their practices and knowledge.

Such contributions to thinking about citizenship education in schools may not only contribute to complexifying the generalised idea that the youth has no interest in politics (an idea internalised by the youngsters themselves), but also to make the youngsters' claims heard. Indeed, they claim for spaces able to intentionally support political debate and promote political education. In this regard, the relevance of cultural capital for political literacy calls attention to the fact that structural inequalities may be reproduced in the participatory sphere, even if the public-school system seems to be proving successful in conveying political knowledge and democratic values. Still, the

educational system (or, perhaps better said, the political decisions that govern it) must be aware of the potential disadvantages of some of its students. A common-ground of citizenship education may be useful to avoid democratic polarisation, in which public-school students are more prone to engage in more politicised forms of participation, while private-school students are mostly acquainted with civic, depoliticised patterns of participation. In analysing the influence of cultural capital we learned that not only the families' cultural resources, but also the students' educational expectations, are related to the youngsters' participatory patterns. Once again, if the schools and the participatory spheres compose are part of a continuum in youngsters' development, more dialogue and collaboration is needed.

This research has also shown that the perception of economic deprivation, and thus of the socioeconomic crisis, may be a breeding ground for politization and mobilisation; however, we should be aware that such a context can also bring about polarisation. In this regard, these are effervescent and unpredictable times that may either bring people closer to political mobilisation or, instead, alienate people from it. Indeed, the youngsters' complaints about the lack of Government responsiveness and the absence of concrete results from more direct political actions point clearly to such risk. Yet, their faith in the school is encouraging. Either naïvely or consciously, young people believe in the social and political role of the school as an arena that may be able to bridge the gaps between them and the political sphere.

Implications and contributions for the political system

Young people plea for a space that may help them access even the most elementary political information, a space in which they may develop competences so as to be better equipped to make political choices (at the time of voting, for example), and also to critically analyse political events and information. The fact that youngsters make this point so clear, advocating for a 'neutral' space in which they could learn politics, away from diversion manoeuvres (associated to the mass media) and political stances that sound mostly like 'partisan tribalism' (associated to the family) is quite revealing of how far they are from being politically apathetic. In fact, those points they make are consonant with the notion of 'post-democracy', in which the political debate is basically a "tightly controlled spectacle" (Crouch, 2004, p. 4), restricted to experts and leaving citizens out. When they address the problems associated to the increasing difficulty in understanding what is credible amidst all the political information they have at their

disposal, they are also addressing an important challenge of current democratic systems. These difficulties expressed by the youngsters are the translation of a major obstacle in constructing their own political stances. The debates about 'post-truth politics' point out to this very problem, as we are currently witnessing "an increasing disregard for factual evidence in political discourse" (Lockie, 2016, p. 1). Indeed, 'post-truth' was the 2016 word of the year for the Oxford Dictionaries, due to the exponential growth in its usage in the context of the United Kingdom's EU referendum and the presidential elections in the United States[56]. According to the Oxford Dictionaries, this notion is "related to or denotes circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion that appeals to emotion and personal belief"[1]. Thus, it comes as no surprise that 'partisan tribalism', and the bias associated to it, fuels fake news[57]. The loss of trust in democratic institutions, populism, and the social media are pointed out as the main factors leading to the post-truth age[58] [59]. Such scenario obviously entails problems of legitimation and usefulness for scientific knowledge, as it promotes the dismantling of one of the backbones of democracy: the existence of a common ground that makes it possible to engage in and develop constructive argumentation[60].

Furthermore, youngsters' discourses – either when they comment on the anti-austerity demonstrations or when they elaborate about their relationship with politics – also convey what seem to be widespread misperceptions (even if, simultaneously, they also point out that they do not wish to fall prey to 'partisan tribalism'): e.g., that young people are not interested in politics; that people who attend demonstrations usually do not vote; that during the dictatorship the economic situation was better than what it is now. In line with the 'post-truth' debate, research on the origins of political misperceptions, which "can distort public debate and undermine people's ability to form meaningful opinions" (Flynn, Nyhan, Reifler, 2017, p. 127), concludes that they are mostly rooted in directionally motivated reasoning, which renders corrective information ineffective. This study highlights that the conveyance of false beliefs, distorting people's opinions and behaviours, is bringing about threatening consequences for democracy and, more generally, for political debate. The relationship between the cognitive processes at play in both the participation and the schooling experiences may

[56] https://www.oxforddictionaries.com/press/news/2016/12/11/WOTY-16
[57] https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/11/upshot/the-real-story-about-fake-news-is-partisanship.html?_r=0
[58] https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/24/opinion/campaign-stops/the-age-of-post-truth-politics.html
[59] http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21706498-dishonesty-politics-nothing-new-manner-which-some-politicians-now-lie-and
[60] https://medium.com/@duncanjwatts/rebuilding-legitimacy-in-a-post-truth-age 2f9af19855a5#.wxoww154s

be of added-value to those debates. By showing that the quality of participation experiences is related to the youngsters' ability to learn based on questioning, critically evaluating what is being learned and what is being transmitted, our results may shed new light on how to tackle the democratic challenges unveiled by the debates on post-truth politics. In other words, bridging the cognitive processes involved in civic and political participation and those that contribute to more meaningful and successful schooling experiences may also be concurring to a critical, representative, democracy.

The recognition of the importance of bridging in- and out-of-school learning should go hand-in-hand with a thorough effort of the political class to get closer to youngsters. If schools and policy-makers joined efforts to bring politicians to schools, discussing political and social changes with young people (not only during electoral campaigns), this would be a step towards their political inclusion. To invite them into the conversation, to listen to them about what is affecting their lives, is a way of transferring political capital (Hannon & Tims, 2010). In this way, they would more likely feel that they belong to a system that actually represents them and which compels them to also participate through formal institutions. If politicians continue to address youth participation in a tokenistic and paternalist fashion – as denounced by youngsters themselves –, not creating effective room for their inclusion, reinforcing the vicious cycle of 'youngsters' political irrelevance', engaging with the 'youngsters-are-disinterested' kind of discourses rather than truly addressing their agendas, young people may start to see democracy as being "used up", "hollowed out" and "empty of meaning"; risks put forward by Arundhati Roy (2009, p. 2). Additionally, not only politicians but also activists, NGO's representatives, and participants in social movements can all work collaboratively to bring plural political debates to the school arena. This way, ideological barriers between participatory spheres could be softened and more synergies could be created during the process of sharing and collective discussion about the public good and democracy. Thus, youngsters could learn that democracy is made of diversity and some of the misinformation about it might be collectively discussed. These suggestions are based on youngsters' recommendations, and they can be an important stepping stone to avoid the relegation of the political dimension (Rancière, 2004; Žižek, 1999; Mouffe, 2005). It is utterly important that the political system becomes more youth-friendly, first and foremost by a true effort from formal political actors to address youngsters' concerns and interests. The promotion of mechanisms of participatory policy-making (e.g., participatory budgeting) and the lowering of the voting age to 16 years old are some of the measures, based on

youngsters' opinions, that are also recommended by other studies (e.g., Deželan, 2015) and that have been proving effective. For instance, the Austrian experiment of lowering the voting age to 16 proved successful, with the turnout rates for those under-18 being significantly higher than for those between 19 and 25 years old[61]. In this regard, the information campaigns and the emphasis on political education are some of the supporting measures that must be taken into account. Not only should the political system be more attuned to scientific results, it must get closer to youngsters' perspectives and the ways they are living politics. This is the only path to rekindle their faith in the democratic system and ensure its survival.

Implications and contributions for research

Following the research line focused on exploring the quality of participation experiences, this thesis has sought to link the self-reported results with contextual data. Therefore, in investigating how the quality of participation is produced inside the participatory settings, we showed that the quality of participation experiences may acquire different meanings in the participation processes. In both the youth wing and the NGO, continuous reflection about the practices members engage in is understood as crucial to achieving civic and political goals. However, this reflexive stance takes on a different form in both settings: a more introspective, contemplative and sharing nature in the voluntary organization; a more argumentative, conflictual and critical form in the youth wing. This is particularly interesting, as the concept of quality of participation – born out of a developmental and critical tradition – tends to equate quality with the integration of differences and the production of collective solutions through debate and argumentation, rather than through contemplative acceptance. Therefore, the ethnographic data may serve to expand and add further sophistication to the concept of quality of participation, as they show that rather different experiences may be equally perceived as potentially possessing high quality. Indeed, both the *meanings* (of quality of participation) and the kinds of *imagination* (of a better world) elaborated in both settings have relevant differences, even if there are similarities between them, namely in what regards the role of emotions and friendship, and the sense of collective self-efficacy.

[61]http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21716030-young-voters-are-becoming-disillusioned-elections-catch-them-early-and-teach-them-value

One aspect that our data highlights is the fundamental role of emotions and bonds of friendship in both contexts; the role of emotional investment and the affective bonds in mobilisation and the promotion of strong commitments was fundamental in both cases (Melucci, 1995; Epstein 1991; Lichterman 1996; Jasper, 2006a). Putnam's (2000) notion of social capital as generating and being generated through bonds between individuals, leading to collective benefits and participatory efficacy, is also of assistance in making sense of the practices and discourses in the voluntary association and the youth wing. Likewise, Bourdieu's (2010 [1979]) conceptualization of social capital as an individual resource based on sociability networks to produce and reproduce the capital can help us understand the investments of youth wing members in other contexts of participation, namely in civil society associations. Anne Mische (2008), while stating that many theorists of democracy separate the 'civil' society from the 'political' society, argues that in practice it is the same people that are involved in both. Although it was not the aim of this research to explore those networks, the involvement of youth wing members in civil society organizations did emerge during the fieldwork. However, TOGod's members never surfaced as having any involvement in institutional politics; in fact, not even talks about political issues emerged (which is particularly puzzling considering the political effervescence created by the electoral period). Rather, these members seemed much more attracted to the "morally magnetic missions" (Eliasoph, 2013, p. x) of volunteering. Furthermore, while in the youth wing the act of imagining a better social and political world, and working towards it, entailed permanent discussion among members, in TOGod the notion of common good, or "making the world a better place", is less problematized, almost as if doing volunteering was intrinsically good in itself. In avoiding the politization of the civic, they fall short of actually promoting social change and learning what democracy is, as its very nature lies in the confrontation of the system (e.g., Žižek, 1999). Ultimately, could such an approach provide an added sense of individual ontological security, and thereby be of assistance in explaining the increasing rates in volunteering among young people and their avoidance of institutional politics? In other words, the ethnographic study in the NGO shows how participation can entail very meaningful experiences, high levels of reflection about the activities in supportive and intentional formats, but at the same time how all of this can happen without crucial political questions being brought to the table.

This research highlights the need to take participation as an interactional practice that has different impacts on individuals. The usefulness of combining quantitative and qualitative methods is that we can vivisect experiential details while simultaneously

being aware of potential effects. In this way we were able to realise that 'quality' is not a statistical feature, but rather an element enacted during the experience, and that different meanings of quality are produced, related to the subjective perspectives of participants regarding their own experiences. Interestingly, the ethnographic data also suggests the existence of participation patterns that may be worth exploring, such as the case of the youth wing members. Further research (involving an extended time length for ethnography) could help to enlighten participatory patterns and how the 'civic' and the 'political' are more closely intertwined. Following activists and participants, rather than being restricted to their groups (as suggested by Baiocchi et al., 2014) would enable examining, for instance, the roles youth wing members play in voluntary contexts and where and in what ways do people who quit the NGO participate instead (if at all) – as well as considering the individual participation experiences. In this way we might grasp participation as occurring through a continuous spectrum, rather than in opposite poles. At the same time, and considering that not all participation experiences entail democratic learning and developmental quality, we should continue to examine the types of pedagogical condiments they possess, the opportunities for reflection about experience they entail, and the extent in which a plural and supportive environment is promoted.

We argue that a mixed-methods approach offers a quite promising path to illuminate the ways in which democracy is thought, felt and practiced. The discourses about the youth participatory crisis are misleading and fail to grasp the complexity of the phenomenon: the diversity of ideas, experiences, interests, claims and knowledge that youngsters express, even before they reach the legal voting age. They ask for more opportunities to have a say in the way they are being governed, they claim for resources and power to influence. And, in this regard, participating in a setting formally connected to the political class (the case of the young wings) should not be the only channel to access political capital. Future research should also include the visions of policy-makers, perhaps jointly with those of young people, contributing knowledge and tools for strengthening democratic systems. Governments need to be closer to people than they are to supra-national institutions – the other way around is delusional and will end up emptying out democracy.

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Appendix 1

Parental approval for under-age participants

U.PORTO
FACULDADE DE PSICOLOGIA
E DE CIÊNCIAS DA EDUCAÇÃO
UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

Pedido de Autorização de participação numa investigação de doutoramento sobre as experiências de participação e a sua relação com o desempenho escolar

Aos Pais e Encarregados de Educação

Vimos por este meio solicitar a autorização para que o/a seu/sua filho/a colabore numa investigação de doutoramento que está a ser levada a cabo sobre as experiências de participação cívica e política dos/as jovens e a sua relação com a aprendizagem e desempenho escolar. Este é um estudo que está a ser desenvolvido no Centro de Investigação e Intervenção Educativa (CIIE), da Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação da Universidade do Porto.

Esta investigação prevê a aplicação de questionários em contexto de sala de aula, com uma duração de 15/20 minutos, e tem a colaboração do Conselho Executivo da Escola S/3 Carolina Michaëlis que o/a seu/sua educando/a frequenta.
Mais, informamos que o anonimato e a confidencialidade dos dados serão garantidos.

Com os melhores cumprimentos
Porto, 27 de Maio de 2013

_____ _____

Isabel Menezes
(orientadora do estudo de doutoramento)

Tiago Neves
(orientador do estudo de doutoramento)

Autorizo o/a meu/minha educando/a

_____ a participar no estudo doutoramento sobre as experiências de participação e a sua relação com o desempenho escolar.

Porto, 27 de Maio de 2013

_____

(Assinatura do/da Encarregado de Educação)

Appendix 2

Questionnaire **(version for basic and high school students)**

Caro/a participante,

Na Faculdade de Psicologia e Ciências da Educação da Universidade do Porto estamos a realizar, no âmbito de um projeto de doutoramento, um estudo que pretende explorar os efeitos das experiências de participação cívica e política de qualidade no desempenho escolar. Nesse sentido, estamos a aplicar questionários em várias escolas, desde o ensino básico até ao ensino superior.

Para o preenchimento deste questionário leia atentamente as frases que se seguem e responda da forma mais sincera possível. Na maioria das questões não existem respostas certas ou erradas. Tente responder de acordo com aquilo que realmente pensa e sente e não de acordo com a forma como acha que deveria pensar e sentir ou como outras pessoas pensam. Não tem um tempo limite para o preenchimento do questionário, mas procure dar a resposta mais imediata a cada uma das questões/afirmações. No fim do questionário verifique se respondeu a todas as questões.

Todas as suas respostas são totalmente confidenciais.

Desde já, agradecemos a sua participação.

Se quiser contactar-nos pode fazê-lo através do e-mail carlalmeida@fpce.up.pt

Carla Malafaia
Tiago Neves
Isabel Menezes

Primeiro, vamos pedir-lhe algumas informações pessoais …

1. Qual a sua idade? _____ anos

2. Qual o seu sexo?

Feminino..... ☐ Masculino.....☐

3. Qual a sua escola? _____

4. Que ano de escolaridade está a frequentar neste momento? _____

5. Usando a escala disponível, de que modo avalia o seu desempenho escolar?

Insuficiente	1	2	3	4	5	Excelente

6. Hoje em dia, em que medida concorda com as seguintes afirmações:

	Discordo totalmente				Concordo totalmente
Sinto-me bem em estudar nesta escola	1	2	3	4	5
Não gosto particularmente desta escola	1	2	3	4	5
Esta escola significa muito para mim	1	2	3	4	5
Fui bem recebido/a nesta escola	1	2	3	4	5
Tenho amigos/as nesta escola	1	2	3	4	5
Não me senti bem no ambiente desta escola	1	2	3	4	5

7. Quantos livros existem atualmente em sua casa?

*Não contar com jornais, revistas ou livros escolares; escolha **apenas uma** das seguintes opções*

Nenhum..... ☐
1 – 10 (alguns livros numa prateleira)……..... ☐
11 – 50 (uma ou mais prateleiras)..... ☐
51 – 100 (uma estante) ..... ☐
101 – 200 (duas estantes) ..... ☐
Mais de 200 (várias estantes cheias de livros)…….. ☐

8. Que nível de escolaridade espera atingir?

*Escolha **apenas uma** das seguintes opções.*

Ensino básico (até ao 9 º ano) ☐
Ensino secundário (até ao 12º ano) ☐
Curso profissional ☐
Licenciatura ☐
Mestrado ☐
Doutoramento ☐

9. Qual a escolaridade dos seus pais?

	Mãe	*Pai*
Nunca frequentou a escola	☐	☐
Frequentou ou concluiu o 1 º ciclo (antiga 4 º classe)	☐	☐
Frequentou ou concluiu o ensino básico (até ao 9 º ano, antigo 5 º ano)	☐	☐
Frequentou ou concluiu o ensino secundário (até ao 12 º ou antigo 7 º ano)	☐	☐
Frequentou ou concluiu o ensino superior	☐	☐

10. Alguma vez sentiu que na sua casa havia problemas financeiros que dificultavam pagar as contas ou a comida (habitação, alimentação, educação, saúde…)?

*Escolha **apenas uma** das seguintes opções.*

Nunca…….. …… ☐
Às vezes…… ☐
Muitas vezes…….. ☐
Não sei……..…… ☐

11. Como se situa politicamente?

Extrema Esquerda 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Extrema Direita

Agora, gostávamos de conhecer as suas opiniões e experiências.

Vamos pedir-lhe para responder usando uma escala de 1 a 5. Se escolher "1", significa que não concorda nada com a frase; se escolher "5" significa que está totalmente de acordo.

Assinale com uma cruz o número que melhor corresponde à sua opinião. Se se enganar, risque por cima e volte a assinalar com uma cruz o número que deseja.

1. Por favor, indique o seu grau de concordância com as seguintes afirmações, considerando em que medida elas se aplicam a si próprio(a).

	Discordo totalmente			Concordo totalmente
Converso sobre questões sociais e políticas com os/as meus/minhas amigos/as e conhecidos/as.	1	2	3	4 5
Trago assuntos sociais e políticos para a conversa com outras pessoas.	1	2	3	4 5
Tenho interesse na política.	1	2	3	4 5
Acompanho o que se passa na política através de jornais e revistas.	1	2	3	4 5
Acompanho programas na televisão ou na rádio que abordam assuntos políticos.	1	2	3	4 5
Presto atenção à informação política que circula na internet.	1	2	3	4 5

2. Nesta secção considere a seguinte lista de atividades e pergunte-se " Eu fiz isto no último ano?"
Depois, deve assinalar na escala disponível o número mais apropriado à sua opinião.

	Fiz esta atividade nos últimos 12 meses?				
	Nunca				*Muito frequentemente*
Participar numa reunião pública ou manifestação relacionada com questões sociais ou políticas.	1	2	3	4	5
Fazer voluntariado.	1	2	3	4	5
Usar um símbolo ou emblema para mostrar apoio a uma causa social ou política (uma pulseira, um crachá, uma t-shirt com uma mensagem política …).	1	2	3	4	5
Comprar (ou não comprar) produtos por razões políticas, éticas e ambientais.	1	2	3	4	5
Participar em ações políticas que possam ser ilegais (ex., queimar uma bandeira, atirar pedras, grafitar paredes …).	1	2	3	4	5
Enviar para os meus contactos notícias, músicas ou vídeos com conteúdo social e político.	1	2	3	4	5
Assinar uma petição na internet.	1	2	3	4	5
Votar nas eleições.	1	2	3	4	5

Fez mais alguma(s) atividade(s) que não esteja(m) aqui referida(s)?
Se sim, qual/quais?

_____
_____

3. Colaborou ou esteve, alguma vez, ligado a:

	Nunca	**Ocasionalmente**	**De forma contínua:**	
			Menos de 6 meses	**6 meses ou mais**
A. Associações de Estudantes?				
B. Partidos políticos ou juventudes partidárias?				
C. Voluntariado ou grupos de caridade (associações de solidariedade social)?				
D. Escuteiros?				
E. Grupos ou associações religiosas?				
F. Associações para a proteção dos direitos humanos (direitos humanos, racismo, paz; …)?				
G. Associações ambientais ou grupos dos direitos dos animais?				
H. Grupos e associações recreativas e de lazer (música, arte, desporto...)?				
J. Grupos ou movimentos sociais e políticos?				

Colaborou ou esteve ligado a outro(s) grupos/organizações que não esteja(m) aqui referido(s)?
Se sim, qual/quais?

_____
_____

3.1. Destes grupos/organizações, qual foi a experiência de participação mais importante/significativa para si?

Por favor indique o tipo de contexto usando a lista acima referida:

_____
_____

3.2. Como avalia o seu nível de envolvimento nos grupos/organizações indicados na questão anterior?

Pouco ativamente envolvido	1	2	3	4	5	Muito ativamente envolvido

3.3. Está atualmente envolvido nesse grupo/organização?

Sim ☐ Não ☐

3.4. Enquanto colaborou nesse contexto realizou alguma das seguintes atividades:

a) Procurar informação em livros, nos *mass media* ou junto de pessoas com mais experiência.

Não, nunca	1	2	3	4	5	Muito frequentemente

b) Participar em actividades (como por exemplo protestos, petições, assembleias, reuniões, festas, debates, etc.).

Não, nunca	1	2	3	4	5	Muito frequentemente

c) Organizar actividades (como por exemplo petições, protestos, festas, reuniões, assembleias, debates, tomadas públicas de posição, etc.).

Não, nunca	1	2	3	4	5	Muito frequentemente

d) Tomar decisões (sozinho ou em grupo).

Não, nunca	1	2	3	4	5	Muito frequentemente

3.5. Enquanto colaborou, com que frequência sentiu que:

a) Havia diferentes pontos de vista em discussão.

Não, nunca	1	2	3	4	5	Muito frequentemente

b) Os conflitos de opinião davam origem a novas formas de ver as questões.

Não, nunca	1	2	3	4	5	Muito frequentemente

c) Eram abordados problemas reais e/ou do seu quotidiano.

Não, nunca	1	2	3	4	5	Muito frequentemente

d) A participação era muito importante para si.

Não, nunca	1	2	3	4	5	Muito frequentemente

4. Quais dos seguintes fatores influenciam as suas experiências de participação? Assinale com X os mais importantes.

Falta de tempo	☐
Falta de dinheiro	☐
Falta de interesse	☐
Nível educacional insuficiente	☐
Falta de conhecimento de instituições e organizações	☐
Dificuldades criadas por amigos e familiares	☐
Falta de oportunidades no sítio onde vive	☐

5. Em que medida concorda com as seguintes afirmações?

	Discordo totalmente			Concordo totalmente
Sinto que a maior parte das pessoas é de confiança	1	2	3	4 5
Sei mais de política do que a maioria das pessoas da minha idade.	1	2	3	4 5
Quando estão a ser discutidos assuntos políticos, normalmente tenho algo a dizer.	1	2	3	4 5
As pessoas importantes do Governo preocupam-se muito pouco com as opiniões das pessoas.	1	2	3	4 5
No nosso país, uma minoria de pessoas tem muito poder político enquanto a maioria tem pouco poder.	1	2	3	4 5
As coisas podem mudar para melhor se os jovens trabalharem em conjunto.	1	2	3	4 5
Se os jovens trabalharem em conjunto podem influenciar as decisões do Governo.	1	2	3	4 5
Independentemente das falhas que possa ter, a democracia continua a ser o melhor sistema de Governo para Portugal .	1	2	3	4 5
Prefiro viver numa democracia do que em qualquer outro sistema que possa imaginar.	1	2	3	4 5

6. Em que medida concorda com as seguintes afirmações?

Uma democracia que verdadeiramente representa o povo, deve:	Discordo totalmente			Concordo totalmente

Ter o direito de mandar calar aqueles que se opõem ao Governo.	1	2	3	4	5
Nunca prender ninguém sem julgamento.	1	2	3	4	5
Garantir a todos o direito de organizar manifestações e protestos pacíficos.	1	2	3	4	5
Mostrar tolerância a todos, mesmo aos seus opositores.	1	2	3	4	5

Agora, gostávamos de lhe pedir que pensasse na sua experiência enquanto estudante e respondesse às duas questões seguintes.

7. Em que medida concorda com as seguintes afirmações?

	Discordo totalmente				Concordo totalmente
Acredito que conseguirei completar os meus estudos.	1	2	3	4	5
Considero que consigo desenvolver boas competências de estudo.	1	2	3	4	5
Acho que vou conseguir ter boas notas.	1	2	3	4	5
Espero conseguir progredir nos meus estudos.	1	2	3	4	5
Acho que vou conseguir ter sucesso em todos os testes/exames.	1	2	3	4	5
Gosto de participar e responder a perguntas durante as aulas.	1	2	3	4	5
Considero que vou conseguir estudar até onde eu quiser.	1	2	3	4	5

8. Se considerar a sua experiência, em que medida concorda com as seguintes afirmações?

	Discordo totalmente				Concordo totalmente
Quando estudo reúno informação de diferentes fontes, tais como as aulas, textos e discussões.	1	2	3	4	5
Sempre que possível, tento relacionar ideias de cada disciplina com ideias de outras disciplinas.	1	2	3	4	5
Quando estou a ler para uma disciplina, tento relacionar o assunto com o que já sei.	1	2	3	4	5
Quando estudo, escrevo resumos curtos das ideias principais da matéria das aulas.	1	2	3	4	5
Tento aplicar as ideias dos textos que li a outras atividades das disciplinas, como a exposição teórica e a discussão.	1	2	3	4	5

Frequentemente, dou por mim a questionar coisas que ouvi ou li nas diferentes disciplinas para decidir se as considero convincentes.	1	2	3	4	5
Quando uma teoria, interpretação ou conclusão são apresentadas na aula ou nos textos, tento perceber se há provas consistentes que as apoiam.	1	2	3	4	5
Trato a matéria das disciplinas como um ponto de partida e tento desenvolver as minhas próprias ideias.	1	2	3	4	5
Tento aplicar as minhas próprias ideias relacionadas com o que estou a aprender numa disciplina.	1	2	3	4	5
Sempre que leio ou oiço uma afirmação ou conclusão nas diferentes disciplinas, penso acerca de alternativas possíveis.	1	2	3	4	5
Quando estudo para uma disciplina, sinto-me frequentemente tão preguiçoso ou aborrecido que desisto antes de terminar o que planeei fazer.	1	2	3	4	5
Trabalho muito intensamente para ter sucesso, mesmo que não goste do que estamos a fazer.	1	2	3	4	5
Quando o trabalho numa disciplina é difícil, desisto ou estudo apenas as partes fáceis.	1	2	3	4	5
Mesmo quando as matérias das disciplinas são aborrecidas e desinteressantes, eu consigo continuar a trabalhar até terminar.	1	2	3	4	5
Quando estudo para uma disciplina, tento frequentemente explicar a matéria a um colega ou amigo.	1	2	3	4	5
Tento trabalhar com outros colegas de uma disciplina para completar os trabalhos que tenho de fazer.	1	2	3	4	5
Quando estudo, reservo frequentemente tempo para discutir as matérias com um grupo de colegas.	1	2	3	4	5
Mesmo que tenha problemas em aprender a matéria, tento fazer o trabalho por mim, sem ajuda de mais ninguém.	1	2	3	4	5
Peço ao professor ou a colegas para esclarecer conceitos que não compreendo bem.	1	2	3	4	5

9. Das seguintes questões, selecione por favor a alternativa que lhe parece correta.

9.1.

Nós, cidadãos, estamos fartos!
Votar no partido Azul significa votar a favor de impostos mais altos.
Significa estagnação económica e desperdício de recursos do nosso país.
Vota, antes, no crescimento económico e na livre iniciativa.
Vota por mais dinheiro na carteira de toda a gente!
Não vamos desperdiçar mais 4 anos! VOTA NO PARTIDO BRANCO.

O partido ou grupo que escreveu este panfleto é provavelmente também a favor...

A. ☐ De um menor controlo do Estado sobre a economia.

B. ☐ Da diminuição da idade em que se pode votar.

C. ☐ Da pena de morte.

D. ☐ De eleições mais frequentes.

9.2. Um ditador concorda em restaurar a democracia no seu país. Qual das seguintes ações seria a prova mais convincente de que está, de facto, a promover a democracia?

A. ☐ Declara o apoio a outros líderes do seu partido.

B. ☐ Organiza uma manifestação em defesa da democracia na capital.

C. ☐ Marca uma data para a realização de eleições nacionais com vários partidos.

D. ☐ Conversa com um jornalista sobre a necessidade da democracia.

9.3.

MINISTRO SOLICITADO A DEMITIR-SE

A empresa X foi escolhida pelo Ministro dos Transportes para construir uma estrada, apesar do facto de o seu custo ser mais elevado que o apresentado por outras empresas. Foi mais tarde revelado que o irmão do Ministro é o maior accionista da empresa X. Os deputados pedem a demissão do Ministro.

Porque é que os deputados querem que o Ministro se demita?

A. ☐ O Ministro não deve decidir quem constrói as estradas.

B. ☐ A família do Ministro não deve ser accionista de nenhuma empresa.

C. ☐ O Ministro recebeu dinheiro da companhia que construiu a estrada.

D. ☐ A decisão do Ministro foi afetada pelos seus interesses privados.

9.4. Qual é a função dos vários partidos políticos num país democrático?

A. ☐ Representar diferentes opiniões.

B. ☐ Limitar a corrupção política.

C. ☐ Impedir as manifestações políticas.

D. ☐ Encorajar a competição económica.

10.5. Tenha em conta as seguintes imagens que dão conta de acontecimentos recentes no nosso país:

O que é que estas imagens lhe sugerem?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

9. Em que medida concorda com as seguintes afirmações?

Um(a) bom(a) cidadão(ã)…	Discordo totalmente				Concordo totalmente
Obedece à lei.	1	2	3	4	5
Vota em todas as eleições.	1	2	3	4	5
Pertence a um partido político.	1	2	3	4	5
Trabalha/tem um emprego.	1	2	3	4	5
Participa numa manifestação pacífica contra uma lei injusta.	1	2	3	4	5
Conhece a História do seu país.	1	2	3	4	5
Participa em atividades para ajudar as pessoas da comunidade.	1	2	3	4	5
Participa em atividades em favor dos direitos humanos ou do ambiente.	1	2	3	4	5
Envolve-se em discussões políticas.	1	2	3	4	5
Paga impostos.	1	2	3	4	5
Defende os direitos das mulheres.	1	2	3	4	5

Chegou ao fim.
Obrigada pela sua colaboração!!!

Appendix 3

Leaflet used in the focus group discussions (version for basic and high school students)

Manifestações e Reivindicações Sociais

- Alguns jovens acham que as manifestações são importantes, pela oportunidade de lutar por direitos e pela mudança

"A população tem o dever de se manifestar, a população tem uma palavra a dar para o rumo do país." (11º ano)

"Uma forma de união e solidariedade. Manifesta-se o que se sente e pensa. E a luta por melhores condições de vida, pelo fim da desigualdade e da corrupção." (2º ano)

- Outros jovens falam nas manifestações como sendo prejudiciais ao bem-comum, não tendo qualquer efeito na mudança

"Pessoalmente, não sou muito a favor de manifestações pois em vez de trazerem um acordo apenas trazem destruição e agressões." (2º ano)

"Essas manifestações não têm valido de nada, uma vez que o nosso Governo prejudica cada vez mais toda a população" (8º ano)

E tu? O que achas?

Jovens e a Governação

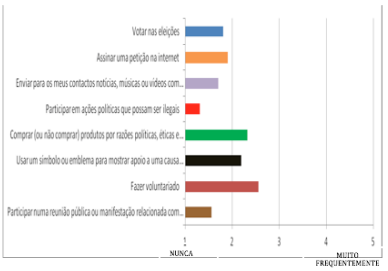
- Muitos jovens concordam que se trabalharem em conjunto as coisas podem mudar para melhor e podem influenciar as decisões do Governo...

- No entanto, também há quem diga que o Governo não se preocupa com as opiniões das pessoas e que a maioria tem pouco poder político.

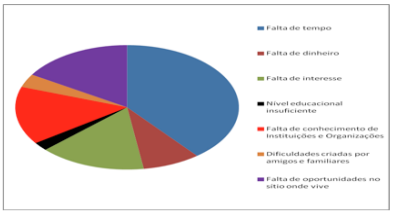
Qual a tua opinião?

Experiências de participação juvenil

- As formas e níveis de participação cívica e política dos jovens...



- A falta de tempo e de interesse, mas também de oportunidades, são os obstáculos que mais influenciam as experiências de participação



O que é que estes resultados te sugerem?

A Democracia

- Alguns jovens questionam o sistema democrático em que vivemos, apontando-lhe falhas e fragilidades...

"O que mais me choca é que às vezes a população não tem sequer liberdade de expressão. Questiono-me assim: 'que democracia é esta?'" (8º ano)

"Neste momento Portugal é considerado um país em democracia mas estamos cada vez mais perto de voltar à ditadura." (8º ano)

"Democracia significa que o poder é do povo, mas se o poder é conhecimento então considero que não temos poder nenhum." (11º ano)

"O futuro passará pela educação política do povo, para que este não se deixe levar por quaisquer palavras e por caras de meninos. Só assim o povo poderá votar, esclarecido." (11º ano)

- No entanto, a maioria considera que, comparado com qualquer outro sistema, a democracia continua a ser o melhor sistema de Governo para Portugal.

Qual a tua opinião sobre este assunto?

Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação da Universidade do Porto

As tendências e os efeitos das experiências de participação cívica e política juvenil

Carla Malafaia,
Tiago Neves e Isabel Menezes

Appendix 4

Guide of Focus Group Discussions

Guião - Grupo de discussão focalizada

Nota: Para iniciar o grupo de discussão e para promover e facilitar o debate, apresentar-se-ão imagens relacionadas com algumas formas de participação e propor-se-á a cada pessoa que escolha uma das imagens e comente esta escolha. As imagens estão relacionadas com formas de participação política (ações que visam influenciar o poder político) e também com formas de participação cívica (em que as ações têm um objetivo eminentemente social, em prol da comunidade) convencionais e não-convencionais.

i) Perceções gerais sobre a participação cívica e política

1.1. Porque é que as pessoas participam?

1.2 De que modo os jovens se expressam atualmente e quais os efeitos dessa participação?

ii) Interesse e atenção sobre assuntos políticos

2.1. Quais os temas e assuntos que mais vos interessam e preocupam?

2.2. Costumam acompanhar o que se passa na política através, por exemplo, de jornais, revistas, internet?

2.3. Costumam conversar com amigos e conhecidos sobre questões sociais e políticas?

iii) Experiências de participação

3.1. Em que formas de participação cívica e política é que vocês se envolvem?

3.2. Quais os resultados dessas experiências de participação para vocês e para a vossa comunidade?

3.3. O que aprenderam com essas experiências?

4.3.1. Quais os aspetos mais positivos e quais os mais negativos?

4.3.2. De que serviram essas aprendizagens? (são depois mobilizadas noutras esferas da vida - e.g., formação profissional, trabalho, família,…)

3.4. Nas atividades em que participam, sentem que há partilha e debate de diferentes opiniões e ideias? Sentem que a vossa opinião é tida em conta e valorizada

3.5. Quais os fatores que motivam e quais os que dificultam a participação? (questão dos recursos: informação, escolaridade, tempo, dinheiro, oportunidades no sítio onde vivem)

4. (Apresentação e discussão dos resultados da 1ª fase do estudo e preparação da recolha de dados pelos jovens)